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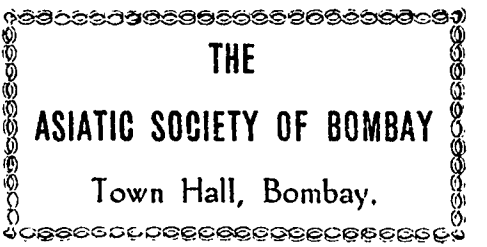

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THE

POETICAL WORKS

OF

PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY.

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PREFACE TO THE REVISED EDITION.

A FEW paragraphs will suffice here by way of preface; other details, relevant to Shelley's poems and to the present republication of them, being supplied in the Memoir, and in the notes at the close of the volumes.

The fact that the previous editions of Shelley were the reverse of scrupulously correct has frequently been remarked upon; as, for instance, thus by a poet who is also a keen critic, Mr. Allingham:—"Hardly any great poet, certainly no modern one, has been so inaccurately printed as Shelley. Helps to the very necessary revision are in existence, and ought quickly to be used."* And thus by Mr. Swinburne, when the present revised edition was already in an advanced stage:—"It is seldom that the work of a scholiast is so soon wanted as in Shelley's case it has been. The first collected edition of his works had many gaps and errors patent and palpable to any serious reader. His text is already matter for debate and comment, as though he were a classic newly unearthed."†

If we enquire *why* Shelley has suffered so much in the printed form of his poems, we shall find that the responsibility rests upon three defendants—Shelley himself, Casualty, and Mrs. Shelley.

Shelley was essentially careless as a writer. Spite of his classical education and tastes, and his cultivated perceptions of

* *Nightingale Valley*, p. 282 (1860). † *Fortnightly Review*, May 1869.

many kinds, he was at all times capable of committing, and incapable of avoiding, slips of grammar and syntax—slips which may indeed be called small, but which are not the less gross—and other oversights, such as rhymes left unsupplied, or nullified by writing the wrong word. In another sense, however, he was *not* a careless writer. Though no poetry bears a more visible stamp of inspiration, his MSS. show that this inspiration did not subside at once into its true and final verbal medium. The false starts, cancellings, blottings, and re-writings, which his first drafts exhibit, are a surprising and bewildering phenomenon. At length one comes upon the right reading—

"Pinnacled dim in the intense inane."

Casualty also played a considerable part in the mischances of Shelley's printed works. Thus *Queen Mab* was only privately printed, and then piratically published; the *Revolt of Islam* is a slightly modified re-issue of a withdrawn book; *Epipsychidion*, *Hellas*, and the volumes containing *Rosalind and Helen* and *Prometheus Unbound*, were printed in England while the poet lived in Italy, and without his having any proofs to revise; *Œdipus Tyrannus* was printed under similar circumstances, and immediately suppressed; *The Cenci* and *Adonais* had the minor misfortune of being first printed in alien Italy, though under the author's own eye; *Julian and Maddalo*, the *Witch of Atlas*, and a number of shorter poems, were posthumous publications; the *Triumph of Life* remains a stately fragment amid many minor *debris*.

Mrs. Shelley brought deep affection and unmeasured enthusiasm to the task of editing her husband's works. But ill health and the pain of reminiscence curtailed her editorial labours: besides which, to judge from the result, you would say that Mrs. Shelley was not one of the persons to whom the gift of consistent accuracy has been imparted; for even this too is a gift in its way, not wholly to be improvised for the occasion.

In preparing the present edition for the press, I have been enabled to collate the collected edition supervised by Mrs. Shelley (in its three current forms of publication) with the

original printed texts of all the poems, save only the semi-private first *Epipsychidion.* I have also, through the liberality of Mr. Garnett, received various snatches of verse, mostly fragmentary, hitherto not printed in any form; and have had the privilege of deciphering for myself a MS. book of Shelley, belonging to his son, and containing very considerable additions to the unfinished tragedy of *Charles the First.* Of the principal poems (or the great majority of them) the MSS., I understand, are not now known to exist.

I have innovated to some extent upon Mrs. Shelley's distribution of the poems; thinking it more reasonable that works of substantial length, such as *Rosalind and Helen, Julian and Maddalo,* and *Epipsychidion,* should appear among the longer poems, instead of among the miscellaneous poems of their respective years. On the other hand, I have placed among fragments a good number of pieces which really are fragmentary, but which had hitherto been intermixed with the complete compositions. I have also, in all subdivisions, carried out more minutely the record of dates, and (save as concerns the translations) the sorting of the poems according to that criterion. A glance at the table of contents will show the reader what these subdivisions are,—Principal Poems, Miscellaneous Poems, Fragments, Translations, and Appendix, as well as the dates of the several works. These are the dates of *composition,* not necessarily of first publication.

The Appendix is a feature new to any edition of Shelley. It contains a number of his juvenile writings extracted from divers sources, some variations of the printed text of the poems, and other odds and ends. Anything that I have found of an earlier date than 1813, when *Queen Mab* was printed, I treat as a juvenile poem. I must here avow and premise, for the use of all gainsayers, that I regard the main body of these juvenile poems as being not only poorish sort of stuff, but absolute and heinous rubbish; the "clotted nonsense" of a boy in whom even an acute literary prophet would have failed to divine, as in any wise conceivable, the author of *Alastor* at twenty-three years of age, of *Prometheus Unbound* at twenty-seven, and of a most glorious and in some respects unexampled body of poetry

accruing up to that dark day of July when the inexorable waves of the Mediterranean closed over a brain and a life still below the rounded manhood of thirty. "Why, then," it may pertinently be asked, "give ampler publicity to all this vile stuff, capable only of derogating from that typical Shelley created for the homage of continents and of centuries?" I answer: Because it interests me as being Shelley's, and ought in my opinion to interest everybody to whom the later developments of that astonishing mind are dear. To find that Pope, whose manhood produced the *Satires*, had in boyhood the capacity which goes to the *Ode on Solitude*, is interesting,—and that apart from the merit which these juvenile verses possess;—to find that Shelley, whose manhood produced *The Cenci* and the *Witch of Atlas*, had in boyhood the incapacity which babbles in the poems of *St Irvyne*, is also and indeed equally interesting. At twenty-three, Shelley as author of *Alastor* is an unusually mature youthful poet; even at twenty, as author of *Queen Mab*, his powers have attained an exceptional ascendant in a certain direction: but at seventeen or eighteen his poetic product is rant and resonance, twaddle and tinsel. Surely this is a fact which may be subjected to some more appropriate treatment than mere hiding out of sight. Such at least is my own sentiment on the subject; and, knowing myself to be not wanting in enthusiasm and reverence for Shelley, I feel justified in acting according to it. I might indeed have felt some hesitation in dragging out into the light of scorn immature writings totally unpublished as yet; but, as a matter of fact, few such have been at my disposal. Six juvenile productions, hitherto unprinted, do, however, appear in the Appendix. Another (written probably in 1811) is in the possession of Mr. Frederick Locker, who obligingly communicated it to me; and this is a very curious scrap, not wanting in *verve* and piquancy, but too unpleasant, in its tone regarding family matters, to see the light of publication. Substantially, therefore, I have simply reproduced, in connexion with Shelley's standard works, those earlier failures which already exist elsewhere in print.

Besides this Appendix, a certain number of pieces, either wholly unprinted till now, or else not printed among the works of Shelley, distinguish the present edition from all predeces-

sors.* No omission from any writing whatever, I need hardly say, has been made on any ground of assumed "propriety," moral or religious. As Shelley did not write, so neither do I revise, for babes and sucklings.

The question how a re-editor should treat the works of a great poet, when confessedly inaccurate in some respects, is of the highest importance. I shall not debate the various sides of the question, for there will be plenty of people to show that the modes of treatment which I have *not* adopted are severally right; I therefore confine myself to saying what I have done, and briefly why. I have considered it my clear duty and prerogative to set absolutely wrong grammar right; as thus—

> "Thou too, O Comet, beautiful and fierce,
> Who *drew'st* [*drew*] the heart of this frail universe;"

and to set absolutely wrong rhyming right; as thus—

> "Beneath whose spires which swayed in the red *flame* [*light*]
> Reclining as they ate, of liberty,
> And hope, and Justice, and Laone's name,
> Earth's children did a woof of happy converse frame";

and to set absolutely wrong metre right; as thus—

> "This plan might be tried too. Where's General
> Laoctonos? It is my royal pleasure,"

instead of

---

* The reader may like to see here the exact list of these pieces. They are as follows:—

[Introduced from printed sources] Lines written in the Bay of Lerici; To —— (Thy dewy looks sink in my breast); Scene from Tasso; Orpheus; To his Genius; Fiordispina (a portion); Love, Hope, Desire, and Fear; Prologue to Hellas; Sonnet to Byron; Fragments of an Unfinished Drama (a portion); Lines (We meet not as we parted); Homer's Hymn to Venus; First Canzone of the Convito; Matilda gathering Flowers; Fragments 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 21, 22, 28, 29, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 64, 96. [Hitherto unprinted] Lines (If I walk in autumn's even); Marenghi (the majority); Lines written for Miss Sophia Stacey; Time Long Past; The Boat on the Serchio (a portion); Fragments of an Unfinished Drama (a portion); Charles I. (the majority); Fragments 9, 23, 24, 25, 66, 67, 68, 69, 70, 71, 87, 88, 89, 90; From Virgil, the Tenth Eclogue.

In the Appendix, only two items come from the collected editions—Singing, and the variation from Prometheus Unbound. Eleven items had never been printed—The Solitary; To Mary, who died in this Opinion; Mother and Son; The Mexican Revolution; To Ireland; To —— (O thou); Eyes; a Hate Song; the second version of the Epithalamium; and the omitted lines from the Indian Serenade, and the Recollection. All the residue is from outlying printed sources.

> "This plan might be tried too. 'Where 's General Laoctonos?
> It is my royal pleasure."

Annexed to this is another duty, that of pointing out any and every such change; this is done in my notes. In speaking of "absolutely wrong" grammar, rhyming, and metre, I by no means include a vast number of laxities in these matters—laxities which are a genuine portion of Shelley's poetic intention and performance, and which it would be presumption in me so much as to censure. These are of course left untouched; and along with them not a few things which, though in strictness even absolutely wrong, may also be fairly understood to appear as Shelley meant them to appear, or as he would not have troubled himself to prevent their appearing. I have made it a point to follow the readings of the original editions, unless some strong presumption should arise that these readings are erroneous, and those of subsequent editions correct. Some instances occur in which I have felt quite uncertain which was correct among different readings, and then I have chosen the one I myself prefer. I have also with scrupulous exactness attended to the punctuation of every line; and (a minor yet not wholly unimportant point) have made the marginal setting of type throughout the volumes such as to represent the true interrelations of rhythm and rhyme—a matter left hitherto at sixes and sevens. The interruption of foot-notes in a page of fine poetry is, I conceive, always some sort of annoyance; and even the numbers or other marks in the text calling attention to notes at a later page come under the same disfavour. Convenient they assuredly are to the tiro or the student: as certainly are they tiresome to the expert. On the whole, it has appeared to me best to remove all notes from the foot of the page to the end of the poem or subdivision, and to give no figures or marks of reference. My own notes come in mass at the end of the respective volumes.

As to conjectural emendation—that most dangerous and lethal weapon, but still, I apprehend, a lawful and needful weapon in the hands of a re-editor—I am well aware that I shall have offended some readers, and perhaps disappointed others. Among friends of high critical qualifications whom I have consulted, some have urged me onwards in the path of emendation,

and others withheld me. I have tended more towards lagging behind than towards outstripping my own theoretic standard in this regard, acting very generally on the rule that a conjectural emendation should not be tolerated, unless it is either a stop-gap expedient against a patent and formidable blunder, or else convincing in a very high degree indeed. Good or bad, many or few, my conjectural emendations are of course all set forth in the notes, and can be cancelled as errata by any reader who may consider them in that light.

The notes do not aim at being excursive, critical, or explanatory, nor to any large extent even illustrative. Such illustration as they supply is chiefly from Shelley's own writings: mainly, the notes profess to be textual, and no more. They specify all modifications of the text * which rest on my own authority, and a fair proportion even of those which depend upon MSS., or the safest editions. I have no fear of having specified too few minute points in these notes—too many, rather.

I have expressed, and must here repeat, my obligations to Mr. Garnett, who, waiving all rights of priority and personal research, has freely imparted to me whatever Shelleyan items he had at command, whether MSS., transcripts, or details of any kind elucidating the text of the poems; including the book containing *Charles I.*, for permission to use which I am indeed primarily indebted, through Mr. Garnett, to the owner, Sir Percy Shelley. It is a gratification to acknowledge also valuable advice or assistance from Captain Trelawny, Mr. Browning, Mr. W. Bell Scott, Mr. Swinburne, Mr. Allingham, Mr. C. B. Cayley, Mr. G. S. D. Murray, my brother, and others. Captain Trelawny's information has been especially valuable both for the poems and for the memoir, and commands my most respectful and grateful thanks.

No man is better qualified than a re-editor of Shelley to affirm that authors, editors, and printers, are all fallible. To flatter myself that the present edition is free from errors of purpose on my part, or from casual oversights, would be the height of folly,

* Not including, however, small changes of punctuation which make no marked difference of meaning; nor changes of spelling or printing, such as "wrapped" instead of "wrapt," or "linkèd" instead of "linked." In these respects I have (properly speaking) systematized rather than altered.

and would be my best title to detraction. But I can say that the editorial work has been to me a true labour of love, and has been gone through diligently and deliberately. Indeed, the pleasure of having anything to do with Shelley's poems is to myself so great that I should have been my own tormentor had I stinted or slurred work in any particular.

W. M. ROSSETTI.

PREFACE BY MRS. SHELLEY TO FIRST COLLECTED EDITION, 1839.

OBSTACLES have long existed to my presenting the public with a perfect edition of Shelley's Poems. These being at last happily removed, I hasten to fulfil an important duty,—that of giving the productions of a sublime genius to the world, with all the correctness possible, and of, at the same time, detailing the history of those productions, as they sprang, living and warm, from his heart and brain. I abstain from any remark on the occurrences of his private life, except inasmuch as the passions which they engendered inspired his poetry. This is not the time to relate the truth; and I should reject any colouring of the truth. No account of these events has ever been given at all approaching reality in their details, either as regards himself or others; nor shall I further allude to them than to remark that the errors of action committed by a man as noble and generous as Shelley may, as far as he only is concerned, be fearlessly avowed by those who loved him, in the firm conviction that, were they judged impartially, his character would stand in fairer and brighter light than that of any contemporary. Whatever faults he had ought to find extenuation among his fellows, since they proved him to be human; without them, the exalted nature of his soul would have raised him into something divine.

The qualities that struck any one newly introduced to Shelley were,—First, a gentle and cordial goodness that animated his intercourse with warm affection and helpful sympathy. The other, the eagerness and ardour with which he was attached to the cause of human happiness and improvement; and the fer-

vent eloquence with which he discussed such subjects. His conversation was marked by its happy abundance, and the beautiful language in which he clothed his poetic ideas and philosophical notions. To defecate life of its misery and its evil was the ruling passion of his soul: he dedicated to it every power of his mind, every pulsation of his heart. He looked on political freedom as the direct agent to effect the happiness of mankind; and thus any new-sprung hope of liberty inspired a joy and an exultation more intense and wild than he could have felt for any personal advantage. Those who have never experienced the workings of passion on general and unselfish subjects cannot understand this; and it must be difficult of comprehension to the younger generation rising around, since they cannot remember the scorn and hatred with which the partisans of reform were regarded some few years ago, nor the persecutions to which they were exposed. He had been from youth the victim of the state of feeling inspired by the reaction of the French Revolution; and believing firmly in the justice and excellence of his views, it cannot be wondered that a nature as sensitive, as impetuous, and as generous, as his, should put its whole force into the attempt to alleviate for others the evils of those systems from which he had himself suffered. Many advantages attended his birth; he spurned them all when balanced with what he considered his duties. He was generous to imprudence, devoted to heroism.

These characteristics breathe throughout his poetry. The struggle for human weal; the resolution firm to martyrdom; the impetuous pursuit, the glad triumph in good; the determination not to despair;—such were the features that marked those of his works which he regarded with most complacency, as sustained by a lofty subject and useful aim.

In addition to these, his poems may be divided into two classes,—the purely imaginative, and those which sprang from the emotions of his heart. Among the former may be classed *The Witch of Atlas*, *Adonais*, and his latest composition, left imperfect, *The Triumph of Life*. In the first of these particularly, he gave the reins to his fancy, and luxuriated in every idea as it rose; in all, there is that sense of mystery which formed an essential portion of his perception of life—a clinging to the

subtler inner spirit, rather than to the outward form—a curious and metaphysical anatomy of human passion and perception.

The second class is, of course, the more popular, as appealing at once to emotions common to us all. Some of these rest on the passion of love; others on grief and despondency; others on the sentiments inspired by natural objects. Shelley's conception of love was exalted, absorbing, allied to all that is purest and noblest in our nature, and warmed by earnest passion; such it appears when he gave it a voice in verse. Yet he was usually averse to expressing these feelings, except when highly idealized; and many of his more beautiful effusions he had cast aside unfinished, and they were never seen by me till after I had lost him. Others, as for instance *Rosalind and Helen* and *Lines written among the Euganean Hills*, I found among his papers by chance; and with some difficulty urged him to complete them. There are others, such as the *Ode to the Skylark* and *The Cloud*, which, in the opinion of many critics, bear a purer poetical stamp than any other of his productions. They were written as his mind prompted: listening to the carolling of the bird, aloft in the azure sky of Italy; or marking the cloud as it sped across the heavens, while he floated in his boat on the Thames.

No poet was ever warmed by a more genuine and unforced inspiration. His extreme sensibility gave the intensity of passion to his intellectual pursuits; and rendered his mind keenly alive to every perception of outward objects, as well as to his internal sensations. Such a gift is, among the sad vicissitudes of human life, the disappointments we meet, and the galling sense of our own mistakes and errors, fraught with pain; to escape from such, he delivered up his soul to poetry, and felt happy when he sheltered himself from the influence of human sympathies, in the wildest regions of fancy. His imagination has been termed too brilliant, his thoughts too subtle. He loved to idealize reality; and this is a taste shared by few. We are willing to have our passing whims exalted into passions, for this gratifies our vanity; but few of us understand or sympathize with the endeavour to ally the love of abstract beauty, and adoration of abstract good, the τὸ ἀγαθὸν καὶ τὸ καλὸν of the Socratic philosophers, with our sympathies with our kind. In

this, Shelley resembled Plato; both taking more delight in the abstract and the ideal than in the special and tangible. This did not result from imitation; for it was not till Shelley resided in Italy that he made Plato his study. He then translated his *Symposium* and his *Ion;* and the English language boasts of no more brilliant composition than Plato's Praise of Love translated by Shelley. To return to his own poetry. The luxury of imagination, which sought nothing beyond itself (as a child burthens itself with Spring flowers, thinking of no use beyond the enjoyment of gathering them), often showed itself in his verses: they will be only appreciated by minds which have resemblance to his own; and the mystic subtlety of many of his thoughts will share the same fate. The metaphysical strain that characterizes much of what he has written was, indeed, the portion of his works to which, apart from those whose scope was to awaken mankind to aspirations for what he considered the true and good, he was himself particularly attached. There is much, however, that speaks to the many. When he would consent to dismiss these huntings after the obscure (which, entwined with his nature as they were, he did with difficulty), no poet ever expressed in sweeter, more heart-reaching, or more passionate verse, the gentler or more forcible emotions of the soul.

A wise friend once wrote to Shelley: "You are still very young, and in certain essential respects you do not yet sufficiently perceive that you are so." It is seldom that the young know what youth is, till they have got beyond its period; and time was not given him to attain this knowledge. It must be remembered that there is the stamp of such inexperience on all he wrote; he had not completed his nine-and-twentieth year when he died. The calm of middle life did not add the seal of the virtues which adorn maturity to those generated by the vehement spirit of youth. Through life also he was a martyr to ill health, and constant pain wound up his nerves to a pitch of susceptibility that rendered his views of life different from those of a man in the enjoyment of healthy sensations. Perfectly gentle and forbearing in manner, he suffered a good deal of internal irritability, or rather excitement, and his fortitude to bear was almost always on the stretch; and thus, during a short life, had gone through more experience of sensation than many

whose existence is protracted. "If I die to-morrow," he said, on the eve of his unanticipated death, "I have lived to be older than my father." The weight of thought and feeling burthened him heavily; you read his sufferings in his attenuated frame, while you perceived the mastery he held over them in his animated countenance and brilliant eyes.

He died, and the world showed no outward sign. But his influence over mankind, though slow in growth, is fast augmenting; and, in the ameliorations that have taken place in the political state of his country, we may trace in part the operation of his arduous struggles. His spirit gathers peace in its new state from the sense that, though late, his exertions were not made in vain, and in the progress of the liberty he so fondly loved.

He died, and his place, among those who knew him intimately, has never been filled up. He walked beside them like a spirit of good to comfort and benefit—to enlighten the darkness of life with irradiations of genius, to cheer it with his sympathy and love. Any one, once attached to Shelley, must feel all other affections, however true and fond, as wasted on barren soil in comparison. It is our best consolation to know that such a pure-minded and exalted being was once among us, and now exists where we hope one day to join him;—although the intolerant, in their blindness, poured down anathemas, the Spirit of Good, who can judge the heart, never rejected him.

In the notes appended to the poems, I have endeavoured to narrate the origin and history of each. The loss of nearly all letters and papers which refer to his early life renders the execution more imperfect than it would otherwise have been. I have, however, the liveliest recollection of all that was done and said during the period of my knowing him. Every impression is as clear as if stamped yesterday, and I have no apprehension of any mistake in my statements as far as they go. In other respects, I am indeed incompetent; but I feel the importance of the task, and regard it as my most sacred duty. I endeavour to fulfil it in a manner he would himself approve; and hope, in this publication, to lay the first stone of a monument due to Shelley's genius, his sufferings, and his virtues:

Se al seguir son tarda,
Forse avverrà che 'l bel nome gentile
Consacrerò con questa stanca penna.

POSTSCRIPT TO LATER EDITION OF 1839.

IN revising this new edition, and carefully consulting Shelley's scattered and confused papers, I found a few fragments which had hitherto escaped me, and was enabled to complete a few poems hitherto left unfinished. What at one time escapes the searching eye, dimmed by its own earnestness, becomes clear at a future period. By the aid of a friend, I also present some poems complete and correct which hitherto have been defaced by various mistakes and omissions. It was suggested that the poem *To the Queen of my Heart* was falsely attributed to Shelley. I certainly find no trace of it among his papers; and, as those of his intimate friends whom I have consulted never heard of it, I omit it.

Two poems are added of some length, *Swellfoot the Tyrant* and *Peter Bell the Third.* I have mentioned the circumstances under which they were written, in the notes; and need only add that they are conceived in a very different spirit from Shelley's usual compositions. They are specimens of the burlesque and fanciful; but, although they adopt a familiar style and homely imagery, there shine, through the radiance of the poet's imagination, the earnest views and opinions of the politician and the moralist.

PREFACE BY MRS. SHELLEY

TO THE VOLUME OF POSTHUMOUS POEMS, PUBLISHED IN 1824.

In nobil sangue vita umile e queta,
Ed in alto intelletto un puro core;
Frutto senile in sul giovenil fiore,
E in aspetto pensoso anima lieta.—PETRARCA.

IT had been my wish, on presenting the public with the Posthumous Poems of Shelley, to have accompanied them by a biographical notice. As it appeared to me that at this moment a narration of the events of my husband's life would come more gracefully from other hands than mine, I applied to Leigh Hunt. The distinguished friendship that Shelley felt for him, and the enthusiastic affection with which Leigh Hunt clings to his friend's memory, seemed to point him out as the person best calculated for such an undertaking. His absence from this country, which prevented our mutual explanation, has unfortunately rendered my scheme abortive. I do not doubt but that on some other occasion he will pay this tribute to his lost friend, and sincerely regret that the volume which I edit has not been honoured by its insertion.

The comparative solitude in which Shelley lived was the occasion that he was personally known to few; and his fearless enthusiasm in the cause which he considered the most sacred upon earth, the improvement of the moral and physical state of mankind, was the chief reason why he, like other illustrious reformers, was pursued by hatred and calumny. No man was ever more devoted than he to the endeavour of making those

around him happy; no man ever possessed friends more unfeignedly attached to him. The ungrateful world did not feel his loss, and the gap it made seemed to close as quickly over his memory as the murderous sea above his living frame. Hereafter men will lament that his transcendent powers of intellect were extinguished before they had bestowed on them their choicest treasures. To his friends his loss is irremediable: the wise, the brave, the gentle, is gone for ever! He is to them as a bright vision, whose radiant track, left behind in the memory, is worth all the realities that society can afford. Before the critics contradict me, let them appeal to any one who had ever known him. To see him was to love him; and his presence, like Ithuriel's spear, was alone sufficient to disclose the falsehood of the tale which his enemies whispered in the ear of the ignorant world.

His life was spent in the contemplation of nature, in arduous study, or in acts of kindness and affection. He was an elegant scholar and a profound metaphysician; without possessing much scientific knowledge, he was unrivalled in the justness and extent of his observations on natural objects; he knew every plant by its name, and was familiar with the history and habits of every production of the earth; he could interpret without a fault each appearance in the sky; and the varied phenomena of heaven and earth filled him with deep emotion. He made his study and reading-room of the shadowed copse, the stream, the lake, and the waterfall. Ill health and continual pain preyed upon his powers; and the solitude in which we lived, particularly on our first arrival in Italy, although congenial to his feelings, must frequently have weighed upon his spirits; those beautiful and affecting *Lines written in dejection near Naples* were composed at such an interval; but, when in health, his spirits were buoyant and youthful to an extraordinary degree.

Such was his love for nature that every page of his poetry is associated, in the minds of his friends, with the loveliest scenes of the countries which he inhabited. In early life he visited the most beautiful parts of this country and Ireland. Afterwards the Alps of Switzerland became his inspirers. *Prometheus Unbound* was written among the deserted and flower-grown ruins

of Rome; and, when he made his home under the Pisan hills, their roofless recesses harboured him as he composed *The Witch of Atlas*, *Adonais*, and *Hellas*. In the wild but beautiful Bay of Spezia, the winds and waves which he loved became his playmates. His days were chiefly spent on the water; the management of his boat, its alterations and improvements, were his principal occupation. At night, when the unclouded moon shone on the calm sea, he often went alone in his little shallop to the rocky caves that bordered it, and, sitting beneath their shelter, wrote *The Triumph of Life*, the last of his productions. The beauty but strangeness of this lonely place, the refined pleasure which he felt in the companionship of a few selected friends, our entire sequestration from the rest of the world, all contributed to render this period of his life one of continued enjoyment. I am convinced that the two months we passed there were the happiest which he had ever known: his health even rapidly improved, and he was never better than when I last saw him, full of spirits and joy, embark for Leghorn, that he might there welcome Leigh Hunt to Italy. I was to have accompanied him; but illness confined me to my room, and thus put the seal on my misfortune. His vessel bore out of sight with a favourable wind, and I remained awaiting his return by the breakers of that sea which was about to engulf him.

He spent a week at Pisa, employed in kind offices toward his friends, and enjoying with keen delight the renewal of their intercourse. He then embarked with Williams, the chosen and beloved sharer of his pleasures and of his fate, to return to us. We waited for them in vain; the sea by its restless moaning seemed to desire to inform us of what we would not learn:—— but a veil may well be drawn over such misery. The real anguish of those moments transcended all the fictions that the most glowing imagination ever pourtrayed: our seclusion, the savage nature of the inhabitants of the surrounding villages, and our immediate vicinity to the troubled sea, combined to imbue with strange horror our days of uncertainty. The truth was at last known,—a truth that made our loved and lovely Italy appear a tomb, its sky a pall. Every heart echoed the deep lament, and my only consolation was in the praise and earnest

love that each voice bestowed and each countenance demonstrated for him we had lost,—not, I fondly hope, for ever; his unearthly and elevated nature is a pledge of the continuation of his being, although in an altered form. Rome received his ashes; they are deposited beneath its weed-grown wall, and "the world's sole monument" is enriched by his remains.

I must add a few words concerning the contents of this volume. *Julian and Maddalo*, *The Witch of Atlas*, and most of the Translations, were written some years ago; and, with the exception of *The Cyclops*, and the Scenes from the *Magico Prodigioso*, may be considered as having received the author's ultimate corrections. *The Triumph of Life* was his last work, and was left in so unfinished a state that I arranged it in its present form with great difficulty. All his poems which were scattered in periodical works are collected in this volume, and I have added a reprint of *Alastor, or the Spirit of Solitude:* the difficulty with which a copy can be obtained is the cause of its republication. Many of the Miscellaneous Poems, written on the spur of the occasion, and never retouched, I found among his manuscript books, and have carefully copied. I have subjoined, whenever I have been able, the date of their composition.

I do not know whether the critics will reprehend the insertion of some of the most imperfect among them; but I frankly own that I have been more actuated by the fear lest any monument of his genius should escape me than the wish of presenting nothing but what was complete to the fastidious reader. I feel secure that the lovers of Shelley's poetry (who know how, more than any poet of the present day, every line and word he wrote is instinct with peculiar beauty) will pardon and thank me: I consecrate this volume to them.

The size of this collection has prevented the insertion of any prose pieces. They will hereafter appear in a separate publication.

MEMOIR OF SHELLEY.

"Let us see the truth, whatever that may be."—SHELLEY, 1822.

"A full Life of Shelley should be written at once, while the materials for it continue in reach; a biography composed in harmony with the present general disposition to have faith in him, yet not shrinking from a candid statement of all ambiguous passages, through a reasonable confidence that the most doubtful of them will be found consistent with a belief in the eventual perfection of his character, according to the poor limits of our humanity."—BROWNING, 1851.

To write the life of Shelley is (if I may trust my own belief) to write the life of the greatest English poet since Milton, or possibly since Shakspeare; and, as the greatest poet must be equal at least to the greatest man of any other order, it must also be to write the life of one of the most illustrious personages, of whatever sort, known to these latter ages. And this is peculiarly the case with Shelley, in whom a truly glorious poetic genius was united with, or was one manifestation of, the most transcendent beauty of character,—flecked, indeed, here and there by semi-endearing perversities, or by some manifest practical aberration. However this may be, he commands into love and homage every emotion of the soul, and every perception of the mind. To be a Shelley enthusiast has been the privilege of many a man in his youth; and he may esteem himself happy who cherishes the same feeling unblunted into the regions of middle or advanced age. A full and genuine life of the sublime poet remains yet to be written: the materials for it are ripening, but perhaps even yet not entirely matured. Or the facts of his life, intellect, and character, might be exhibited in a very interesting manner by a proper collation and reproduction of all his known correspondence, combined with all such passages of his poetical or other works as have a distinct personal bearing. Meanwhile it comes to be my good fortune to write

a condensed memoir of Shelley; a memoir in which I find so many facts and details pressing for record that I feel with reluctance compelled to leave very scantily used those treasures of his own correspondence which would give the inner heart of the story so much better than any biographer can do it. But the full facts—the outer phases of incident—of his life from first to last, have never yet been told with the needful combination of sifted and balanced evidence, and of ordered method: different authorities give diverse accounts of almost every particular of his career and belongings, and even of his person. Some of these diversities will be discussed or noted as I proceed: and it is more especially with a view to this result of sifting and certifying—as a contribution towards the systematizing of materials for a Life of Shelley—that I plan this memoir. Brief it necessarily is by the conditions of the case. But I shall endeavour to make it the reverse of loose or vague, and to transmit in it to any future biographer a compact cento of facts; while laying claim to only a moderate amount of exclusive information, and conscious of deficiency as regards fullness of presentation, or profound or exhaustive analysis.

I.—DESCENT AND FAMILY.

The Shelleys are an ancient and honourable house. The name has been spelled Shelly and Shellie, as well as Shelley. The arms are sable, a fesse engrailed between three whelk-shells or; the motto, Fey e Fidalgia. With these whelk-shells legend (or Mr. Jefferson Hogg) connects some story of a paladin, Sir Guyon de Shelley, contemporary with Roland and Charlemagne. Him we may leave to the Ariostean region of history, and contemplate with less blinking eyes a Thomas Shelle as lord, in the time of Edward I., of the manor of Shelley, of Schottis in Nockholt, and of other lands in Kent. There was a Sir Thomas Shelley who fought and died on the scaffold in the cause of Richard II.; and a Sir Richard Shelley, Grand Prior of the English language among the knights of Malta, whose well-proved valour brought him, in extreme old age, to the defence of the island against the Turks in 1565. Somewhat earlier, about the end of the fifteenth century, Edward, the second son of the chief of the house, was settled at Worminghurst Park, and his son Henry married a Sackville; from them descends that branch of the family which has achieved some

fleeting distinction in the way of a peerage and a second baronetcy (the first baronetcy, in the older line, dates from 1611), and an eternal distinction in giving birth to the "poet of poets." The name Bysshe came into the family in the sixth generation after Edward Shelley; John Shelley, the then representative of the junior branch, having in 1692 married Helen, younger daughter and co-heiress of Roger Bysshe of Fen Place. His grandson was Bysshe Shelley, who was born in 1731, and became the poet's grandfather.

It was in the person of this Bysshe Shelley, and in the year 1806 (nearly fourteen years after the birth of the poet), that the second baronetcy came into the race. Sir Bysshe was then an old man, and the father of two families. By his first wife, Mary Katharine, heiress of the Rev. Theobald Mitchell of Horsham, he had a son Timothy (the poet's father) and a daughter. By his second wife, Elizabeth Jane Sydney, heiress of Mr. Perry of Penshurst, he had three sons and two daughters. This second family shall not concern us here; further than to say that it inherited from the mother the blood of Sir Philip and other Sydneys, and that the eldest son, John, assumed the name of Shelley-Sidney of Penshurst, was made a baronet, and was the father of Philip Charles Sidney, created Baron de l' Isle and Dudley.

The man who married two heiresses, became a baronet, and founded a second family of sufficient standing to receive a further baronetcy in the first generation, and a peerage in the second, was presumably not an altogether commonplace person: if we may trust the memoir-writers, Sir Bysshe Shelley, so far from being commonplace, was decidedly eccentric. He was tall, handsome, and clever; and represented, in the eyes of a younger generation, a gentleman of the old school. His place of birth was Christ's Church, Newark, in North America; in that country, having no fortune, he is said to have practised as a quack doctor, and to have owned a mill. He was penurious, yet spent lavishly upon building Castle Goring, which he left unfinished. A staunch adherent of the Whig house of Norfolk (the prime magnates in his part of the county of Sussex), he thus earned his baronetcy. For years before his death, which occurred on the 6th of January 1815, he had lived in retirement at Horsham, not on good terms with his eldest son Timothy, whom he would curse to his face with a will. He left him one of the

opulent heirs of the kingdom: £300,000 in the funds, and £20,000 per annum, being named as the amount which the vigorous old man "cut up for." Among several curious incidents of his life, the most odd of all* is that he eloped with both of his English wives: and two of his daughters also eloped. (A rumour was current of an American wife preceding both the English ones; and there is apparently *something* in this story, as a letter from Percy Shelley, dated in January 1812, and seen by myself, exists in MS., saying that his grandfather behaved very badly to "*three* wives.") Thus elopement was a tradition in the family; which we may bear in mind when another such performance comes to be spoken of—that of the poet. Sir Bysshe had no speculative opinions, unless in the way of negation, and cared nothing for the speculative opinions of others, however extreme: his grandson Percy and he were therefore on terms of mutual tolerance and mutual alienation. The less there was in common between them, the less call was there for positive antipathy: a shrug of the shoulders summed up all. Sir Bysshe was indeed on much better terms with his youthful and aspiring grandson and godson than with his own son Timothy. The same letter which I have referred to just above says that Sir Bysshe was "a complete atheist," and built all his hopes on annihilation.

Timothy Shelley was born in September 1753. In 1791 he married Elizabeth, a rare beauty, daughter of Charles Pilfold Esquire, of Effingham, Surrey, and had by her a family of two sons and five daughters. The eldest child was Percy Bysshe. The sisters (besides a Hellen who died in infancy) were named Elizabeth, Mary, Hellen (thus spelled in the family), and Margaret, and were all noted beauties; the latter three survive. The brother, John, born in March 1806, the youngest of all the family, died in November 1866. The mother was "mild and tolerant, yet narrow-minded;"† clever, and even intellectual, but not in the literary, still less the poetical, direction. She is stated to have been an excellent letter-writer.

The believer in Percy Bysshe Shelley naturally conceives a prepossession against the poet's father, with whom he would

* Medwin's *Life of Shelley*, vol. i., p. 8. I will here say, once for all, that Medwin is an inaccurate writer, and thus save myself the necessity of continually expressing, when I state anything on his authority, a doubt whether it is true or false.

† Shelley, in Hogg's *Life*, vol. i., p. 350.

not or could not agree: but no doubt Sir Timothy had some of the ordinary good qualities of a human being and country gentleman. He was well reputed as a landlord and practical agriculturist, hospitable, kind (though sometimes capricious and violent) in his family and household, proud at first of his illustrious son's talents, and not precisely destitute of literary tastes. The style of his letters, however, shows him to have had no sort of natural or acquired facility, even in the most level forms of writing. This objection (if I may be excused for referring to so small a point) does not extend to *handwriting:* Sir Timothy wrote a capital free clear hand, as perceptible in his franking signature outside some of his son's letters. He had the air of the old school off and on; and has even been described as a disciple of Chesterfield and La Rochefoucauld, though that is not the impression which the general body of evidence concerning him leaves on the mind. He was a Christian as so many other people are—a religious indifferentist who acquiesced in what he found established. As a member of Parliament, sitting for the borough of Shoreham, he made no figure, and voted according to his ducal and other party ties. Creature comforts and material interests were what he understood; he was fond of self-assertion and pompous interferences, and, like his father, a swearer, and capable of niggardliness, and of considerable oddity of demeanour. Nobody except himself, I believe, ever considered him, during his long life of ninety years, noticeable for any particular talent. That such a person was exceedingly ill adapted to stand *in loco parentis* to a divine phænomenon like Percy Shelley is flagrantly manifest; but there is nothing nefarious, nor even grossly stupid, in the character whose recorded outlines are sketched above, and we shall do well to enter upon the study of the poet's career without any conviction that he was foredoomed to spiteful or intentional persecution at his father's hands.

Mr. and Mrs. Timothy Shelley were settled at Field Place, near Horsham, Sussex; a mansion ever venerable to posterity, and which remains the property of the present baronet, the poet's son, though not just at present in his personal occupation.

II.—BIRTH AND CHILDHOOD.

Percy Bysshe Shelley was born at Field Place on the 4th of August 1792. To mention August 1792 is to carry back one's

mind to the overthrow of monarchy in France. On that day, in Paris, the insurrectionary directory of the Federators held a sitting at the Cadran Bleu, on the Boulevard, at Bancelin the restaurateur's, to concert measures for a rising: Santerre, Camille Desmoulins, and others, were present.* And perhaps the transaction going on within the penetralia of Field Place was of quite coequal importance to the cause of revolutionary free thought.

The infant received the name of Percy from an aunt distantly connected with the Northumberland family; Bysshe, as we have seen, from his grandfather. He was a beautiful boy, with ringlets, deep-blue eyes,† a snowy complexion, and exquisitely formed hands and feet; in disposition gentle and affectionate. But of his mere infancy no record remains; though we may conceive of him as fondling "the great old snake of Field Place"—a large ophidian specimen addicted to the garden of that mansion, and which, so tradition says, had been known as "the *old* snake" three hundred years before. Perhaps it had been wont to fraternize with a dragon which, according to a still extant pamphlet published in 1612, then haunted St Leonard's Forest, in the same district. At last the honoured veteran was accidentally killed by the gardener in mowing grass: doubtless to the bitter sorrow of Percy, whose curious love of snakes and serpents, noticeable time after time in his poems, may probably be traced to this unusual friend of his babbling years.

At six years of age he was sent to a day-school, kept by the Rev. Mr. Edwards of Warnham, and began learning Latin there. He felt some respect for this his earliest instructor, and hence in after days for country clergymen in general: indeed, there is a wondrous anecdote ‡ of a momentary *velléité*, on the part of the then author of *Queen Mab*, to enter the church himself.

At the age of ten Percy was transferred to Sion House School, Brentford, of which Dr. Greenlaw,§ a Scotchman and a clerical Doctor of Law, was the principal. For him also Shelley was not without a sort of respect, though disgusted with his coarse jests, and general hardness of mind as well as discipline. Here

* Hamel, *Histoire de Robespierre*, vol. ii. p. 362.

† So says Miss Shelley (Hellen), and the portrait by Miss Curran gives the same colour. Mr. Thornton Hunt must be wrong in saying "brown" eyes.

‡ Peacock, *Fraser's Magazine*, 1858, p. 656.

§ "The Rev. Dr. *Mackintosh*," according to Mr. Middleton—(*Shelley and his Writings*, vol. i. p. 11). But I find this name in no other authority.

he re-encountered among the pupils Thomas Medwin, his second cousin on the mother's side, and some years his senior. Mostly the boys, numbering about sixty, were sons of local tradesmen; the system of the house was mean; the reception accorded to Shelley by his schoolfellows, and their subsequent treatment of him, full of taunting and petty persecution (for everything lumpish and sordid had a natural repulsion at contact with Percy Shelley); and his situation was one of proportional and acute misery. No distresses are more real or more poignant than those of childhood: the man who laughs at them with reason is the very boy who cowered under them, also not without reason. But there dawned one glorious moment in which Percy ceased to be the possible refined milksop, and became the incipient poetical demigod.

"Thoughts of great deeds were mine, dear friend, when first
The clouds which wrap this world from youth did pass.
I do remember well the hour which burst
My spirit's sleep. A fresh May-dawn it was,
When I walked forth upon the glittering grass,
And wept, I knew not why: until there rose
From the near schoolroom voices that, alas!
Were but one echo from a world of woes—
The harsh and grating strife of tyrants and of foes.

"And then I clasped my hands, and looked around;
But none was near to mock my streaming eyes,
Which poured their warm drops on the sunny ground.
So, without shame, I spake:—'I will be wise,
And just, and free, and mild, if in me lies
Such power; for I grow weary to behold
The selfish and the strong still tyrannize
Without reproach or check.' I then controlled
My tears, my heart grew calm, and I was meek and bold.

"And from that hour did I with earnest thought
Heap knowledge from forbidden mines of lore;
Yet nothing that my tyrants knew or taught
I cared to learn,—but from that secret store
Wrought linkèd armour for my soul, before
It might walk forth to war among mankind."*

Shelley was noticeably subject to waking dreams at Sion House, and had at least one fit of somnambulism there, and others at a later date. He was not studious, and yet he soon outstripped his companions. With one of these he formed an enthusiastic friendship, which, however, had no sequel in his after years; he has recorded it in a short fragment of an *Essay on Friendship*, written not long before his death.†

* *Revolt of Islam*, p. 118. Lady Shelley (*Shelley Memorials*, p. 7) cites these verses as applicable to Shelley's sojourn at Eton. The authority of Medwin, however, who expressly refers them to Sion House instead (*Shelley Papers*, p. 3), appears the most conclusive that can be attained; and I think the opening lines would more naturally indicate the earlier period of boyhood.

† Hogg, *Life of Shelley*, vol. i. pp. 22-24.

III.—SHELLEY AT ETON.

He passed to Eton in his fifteenth year, and experienced, from his less uncultured companions there, much the same bullying and uncongeniality that he had endured at Sion House. But the frail, shrinking, and girlish Shelley, the unready boy who joined in no boyish sports from shyness and delicacy combined, was not made to be bullied in sheepish acquiescence. He rose in unquenched indignation against the outrages of the fagging system, and made it "pass him by on the other side." Indeed, it has been said that he got up a conspiracy against fagging; but this, on the testimony of Etonians quoted by Medwin, does not appear to be accurately expressed. The boys would goad him into paroxysms of rage, and then run away from the explosion: he never pursued them, but requited their attentions by assisting them in their tasks. On one occasion, while Shelley was asleep, some of his persecutors blackened his face; on awaking he was wild with horror. "The few who knew him loved him," says a schoolfellow, Mr. Packe. He had no liking for the time-honoured "grind" of making Latin verses, and would not "submit to the trammels of the gradus;" yet his performances in this line availed to procure him prizes. In like manner, though he neglected the regulated school-attendance, he translated at Eton half of Pliny's *Natural History*. His money was spent on books, chemical instruments, and acts of liberality. "He used to say that nothing ever delighted him so much as the discovery that there were no *elements* of earth, fire, or water."

The activity of Shelley's boyish imagination is best proved by the fact that he "went in for" ghosts and fiends with a real eye to business: he studied the occult sciences, watched for spectres, conjured the devil, and speculated on a visit to Africa for the purpose of searching out the magic arcana which her dusky populations are noted for. The reading of German books (only in translations as yet) fostered this turn of mind. At home also he would, from very early years, tell tales to his still younger sisters, peopling the house and grounds with imaginary personages; would narrate curious events which had, or rather had not, just happened to himself; and would make the girls personate demons and sprites, while he haled liquid fire in a portable stove. No doubt the great turn for chemical experi-

ment which he developed at Eton, and which became his chief passion there, had as much to do with an impressible fancy, and with the fact that chemical practice was prohibited to the schoolboys in their chambers, as with scientific tendencies. He set fire to a tree on the common by lighting gunpowder with a burning-glass; and the incautious touching of an electrical machine in his room at Eton overthrew his tutor, Mr. Bethel, who had discovered the young rebel "raising the devil" by a blue flame. The distinction of being one of the dullest men at the school has been attributed to Mr. Bethel, with whom the future author of *Epipsychidion* lodged. The rigid Dr. Keate was the Head Master at this period. He flogged Shelley liberally, and the scapegrace in return plagued him without stint.

Mysterious and semi-fathomable things happened to Shelley, either in person or in supposition, throughout his life. One of these occurred while he was at Eton. The only official person whom he really liked there was Dr. James Lind of Windsor, a physician, chemist, and tutor, and a man of erudition, who superintended the youth's scientific studies. "He loved me," said Shelley, "and I shall never forget our long talks, where he breathed the spirit of the kindest tolerance and the purest wisdom." He furnished the prototype of the old sage who releases Laon from the tower-prison, in the *Revolt of Islam*, and of Zonoras in *Prince Athanase*. Shelley, having been attacked by a fever which affected the brain, was about to be sent to a private madhouse by his father—so at least he overheard, or learned from a servant*—when Dr. Lind posted to Field Place at the dismayed patient's request, cured him, and dispelled the paternal purpose. Another story told by Shelley,† and doubted by the recipient of the information, is that the immediate cause of his quitting Eton was that, in one of his fits of rage at some boyish persecutor, he struck a penknife through the misdemeanant's hand. According to his own account, this was his third Etonian catastrophe; he had been twice before expelled, but readmitted at his father's instance. The fact that he finally left

* Compare the not entirely identical accounts in Hogg, *Life of Shelley*, vol. i. p. 32, and in the *Shelley Memorials*, pp. 9, 10. Apparently the whole affair of the madhouse was one of the poet's delusions.

† Peacock, in *Fraser's Magazine*, 1858, p. 647. The story is told also, with some degree of variation, by Mr. Thornton Hunt (*Atlantic Monthly*, February 1863, p. 192). He says that Shelley, in the course of his general resistance to the senior scholars and school customs, was dared to pin a companion's hand to the table with a fork, and did so.

Eton some time in 1809, a long interval before his going to Oxford in the autumn of 1810, suggests that he really was withdrawn from the former place with some degree of abruptness, for there is nothing to show that this interval was devoted to preparing for the university.

Immediately after leaving Eton (if not possibly before that event) he had managed to fall in love—which was indeed a feat almost certain to be achieved by a youth of such a disposition. In the summer of 1809 (*ætatis* sixteen or seventeen), he fell captive to his very charming young cousin Harriet Grove, who, with her brother, was on a visit to Field Place. She was the daughter of a clergyman, and was of the same age as Percy, and a good deal like him in face. She returned his affection, engaged or semi-engaged herself to him, and corresponded with him on returning to her home in Wiltshire.

Many further details might be given of Shelley's stay at Eton, did space admit. The one remaining fact essential to be noted is that he went there by the name not only of "Mad Shelley," but also of "Shelley the Atheist." This sounds like an important indication of the early and extreme development of Shelley's speculative opinions; and I think it would be unsafe to reject it as such altogether, though Mr. Hogg affirms that the name of atheist was bestowed at Eton upon any boy specially distinguished for setting the authorities at defiance, whether or not he entertained any opinion at all on the question of Deity. In Shelley's case, the title is said to have come to him in virtue of the firing of the tree, already alluded to. Something may also possibly have been due to the fact that he was known among his schoolfellows for a habit of "cursing his father and the king." And here I will take leave to say that this, so far as his father was concerned, was simply a vile and detestable practice, learned partly from the venerable Sir Bysshe, and partly from the equally venerable Dr. Lind;* and indeed that the poet's animus in regard to his father (for whom nevertheless he had had some affection in quite early years) was in various details derogatory to his character, intellect, and common sense. I think it the leas texcusable trait which has to be recorded of so great and loveable a man. Not long after leaving Eton, Shelley was asked to repeat the cursing process; which, after saying he

* *I. e.*, if Mr. Hogg's account is to be implicitly accepted: but I understand there are fair grounds for dubiety, as regards both Dr. Lind and Sir Bysshe Shelley.

had left it off, he finally consented to do, "and delivered, with vehemence and animation, a string of execrations, greatly resembling in its absurdity a papal anathema: the fulmination soon terminated in a hearty laugh."* Of course, the whole thing was the freak of a schoolboy: but there are some freaks which neither schoolboys nor other persons are tolerated in—as the bestowal upon a father of such nicknames as "Old Buck" and "Killjoy."

IV.—EARLIEST WRITINGS.

Percy Shelley was an uncommon sort of boy, appetent of knowledge (such as suited his own taste), and very rapid in acquiring it, and with impulses and characteristics indicative of genius. He is said to have learned the classical languages as if by intuition—his memory, which was always an excellent one for all sorts of things, retaining whatever he once learned. Still, it does not appear that he as yet exhibited any exceptional originating aptitude or precocity of mind; and certainly, if we look to his earliest writings, such as are preserved in our Appendix, the suggestions which they yield to us are not those of a great capacity or a premature gift—but on the contrary of very shallow incentives puffing up feeble faculties into meaningless forms of self-expression. The child who wrote the *Verses on a Cat*, at perhaps eight or nine years of age, was indeed a ready and sprightly versifier, superior to his years; but, from this simple and pleasing outpouring of a child, we sink down, in the following compositions lasting up to and beyond Shelley's departure from Oxford, into the inflated balderdash of a boy, unmarked either by right perceptions, by any genuine direction of taste, or by promising execution. There is ease of a certain kind, but slavering is a notoriously easy process. Probably the verses preserved are but a small minority of what Shelley wrote in these opening years. At one time—precise boyish age and subject unknown—he and his sister Elizabeth secretly wrote a play, and sent it to Mathews the comedian; who returned it, opining that "it would not do for acting." Presumably not. Another considerable attempt was *The Wandering Jew*, which he wrote together with Medwin about 1809; next to no remains of Shelley's section of it are now accessible, but a safe instinct certifies us that it was nonsense.

* Hogg, *Life of Shelley*, vol. i. p. 138.

A true curiosity of literature is Shelley's first published book, the novel named *Zastrozzi*—one of "a great many" (so says Lady Shelley) which he composed about this time. He wrote it at the age of sixteen, with some co-operation (it is stated) from Miss Grove—which however I should doubt, having regard to dates. It is a wild story of a virtuous Verezzi, persecuted and ruined by the effervescent passion of a "guilty siren," Matilda Contessa de Laurentini, in league with a mysterious and dark-browed Zastrozzi, who has, in chapter the last, a family grudge to clear off. Some deep-buried romance named *Zofloya, or the Moor* (there is great force of suggestion in the letter Z) is recorded to have been the model of *Zastrozzi*. A curiosity of literature this novel would be, if merely on the ground of its authorship, and of its gorgeous absurdity; but, when we learn that there was actually a publisher in human form, Mr. Robinson of Paternoster Row, to pay £40 or so for the privilege of publishing it, thus furnishing forth "a magnificent banquet [not of the Barmecide class] given to eight friends" by the Etonian romancist, and that human reviewers were capable of criticizing it, and deprecating its supposed immoralities (which are in fact few or none), *Zastrozzi* glides from a curiosity into a phænomenon of literature. There is a delicious reserve of tone in the terms which Shelley used a few years later, 10th January 1812, in forwarding his two novels to the philosopher Godwin :* "From a reader, I became a writer of romances.† Before the age of seventeen I had published two, *St Irvyne* and *Zastrozzi*, each of which, though quite uncharacteristic of me as now I am, yet serves to mark the state of my mind at the period of their composition. I shall desire them to be sent to you: do not, however, consider this as any obligation to yourself to misapply your valuable time." If Godwin did misapply his valuable time, and read *Zastrozzi*, he must have been a sight for the gods and the glorified spirit of Mary Wollstonecraft during that process.

The only purpose which *Zastrozzi* can serve at the present day—except to raise a hearty laugh—is to furnish a few indica-

* Hogg, *Life of Shelley*, vol. ii. p. 55. Shelley is wrong in saying *St Irvyne* (whatever may have been the case with *Zastrozzi*) was published before he had attained seventeen years of age; it came out in December 1810, when the author was past eighteen. This is not the only instance in which he understated his age, whether through negligence of mind or possibly with a spice of coxcombry.

† From an expression in a letter of Shelley's dated 10th December 1812 (*Shelley Memorials*, p. 45), it appears that he had by then ceased to be "a reader of romances." But he did not entirely exclude them from his after perusal.

tions how far Shelley's antichristian opinions had been developed at that early date. We must, however, remember that some portions of the romance are ascribed to Miss Grove's authorship. The wicked Zastrozzi, we find, is in one passage an unbeliever in immortality, for which he is distinctly reprobated by the correct-minded author: further on he is not a total unbeliever, but over-page figures as an atheist. Materialism and atheism are denounced by the narrator at a later stage, and there is a passage, in the ordinary religious tone, concerning divine mercy consequent upon repentance. Thus nothing but orthodoxy, though toying on the verge of the atheistic precipice, attaches to Shelley from the investigation of the bad characters of his novel. But the virtuous though "infatuated" Verezzi yields a less respectable Shelleyan result: he dares to think that "love like ours wants not the vain ties of human laws," or in plain English the marriage ceremony.

Nobody now will or ought to read *Zastrozzi* save as a curious study conducive to an exact knowledge of Shelley: nobody *can* read his first volume of verse, for it has entirely disappeared from human ken.* At some time in the year 1810 Shelley called upon a London publisher, Stockdale, and asked to be assisted out of a hobble, as he had commissioned a Horsham printer to strike off 1480 copies (!) of a volume of poems, for which, as he now found, he was unable to pay. Stockdale consented that the book should be transferred to himself; and it was soon announced in the *Morning Chronicle* of 18th September 1810, under the name of *Original Poetry by Victor and Cazire*, and was published in due course. There really was a second author, besides Shelley; possibly Miss Grove. But lo! when the book was out, it was found to embody productions by a third author, and then one of considerable name, and much admired by Shelley, Matthew Gregory Lewis, the author of *The Monk* and of *Tales of Terror;* Victor, or Cazire, or both of them, had been making free with the sepulchral stock-in-hand of that potent necromancer. Shelley withdrew the volume from circulation after a hundred copies or so had got about;

* Everything that is known on this subject is due solely to Mr. Garnett: see his article in *Macmillan's Magazine*, June 1860, *Shelley in Pall Mall.* He has kindly informed me moreover that a gentleman connected with the Shelley family says that Percy "wrote and printed *another* book of verse about the same time. He could not remember the title, but thought a copy might still be in existence."

"Quis desiderio sit modus aut pudor
Tam cari capitis?"

and no one has set eyes on it since. One can but speculate on the question whether Shelley was himself in fault in this matter, or whether he had been duped by his coadjutor. There was certainly some tendency to secretiveness in his early literary attempts; and it may be doubted whether the Etonian scatter-brain would have seen much harm in appropriating stanzas or whole compositions from Lewis if they fell in with his notions—or indeed whether he had ever perceived or pondered the meaning of the word copyright. Stockdale, at any rate, does not seem to have considered himself aggrieved by Shelley, as he soon after undertook the publishing of *St Irvyne;* in fact, after some serious rows during their business connexion, and in the face of an unpaid bill, he continued enthusiastic as to the young author's character and honour.

V.—SHELLEY AT OXFORD.

Meagre indeed must be our account of Shelley at Oxford in comparison with the inimitable treasury of anecdote which Mr. Hogg wrote under the same title, and finally incorporated in his *Life of Shelley.**

Towards the middle or end of October 1810 Shelley went to University College, Oxford, where his father also had been educated; and he at once became acquainted, at the College dinner-table, with Mr. Thomas Jefferson Hogg, a fellow-student in the same College, and of much the same age. This gentleman belonged to a family of high tories living at Norton near Stockton-on-Tees, and was destined for the conveyancing branch of law, having besides the prospect of a competent fortune. We can trace in his book the character of a robust *bon vivant* and man of society, with a great contempt for bores and crotchet-mongers of all sorts, and a generally sardonic or cynical turn, the antipodes of anything "gushing" or any revolutionary idealism, tempered however by a deep respect for the forms and monuments of intellect consecrated by experience. That an acute mind of this calibre should at once have accepted

* The aroma of personal knowledge and affection, along with the keen zest of a *raconteur* who enjoys every oddity, and reinforces it in the telling, impart a peculiar charm to those Oxford reminiscences—and indeed, spite of its many flaws and perversities, to the whole *Life*, the suppression of whose concluding portion defrauds the admirers of Shelley of their just perquisites. That the conclusion exists in MS. has been affirmed to me as a known fact. The worst flaw of all is that letters of Shelley given in Hogg's *Life* are garbled and misdated. Even apart from special information, one can discern that they are jumbled together without any care or guidance to the reader.

Shelley as a beautiful soul and heaven-born genius, and should have been inspired with a warm enthusiasm for him, such as neither radical divergences of view, nor early and final separation, nor subsequent long lapse of time, could avail to bedim, speaks as strongly as anything for the poet's intellectual and personal fascination. It is difficult to say why the author of *Zastrozzi* should have been a considerable figure in the eyes of a young Oxford tory of a literary turn, or rather it can only be accounted for on the ground of his admirable qualities, ascertained by immediate experience: such at any rate he was, and the event proved how thoroughly well Mr. Hogg had succeeded in reading between the lines.

Shelley, now growing up towards man's estate, was strong, active, and tall (nearly 5 feet 11), though slight, narrow-chested, and with a kind of stoop:* his bones, joints, and extremities, were large; his complexion red and white, but easily tanned and freckled by exposure; his features small, not regular save the mouth, and in some sort feminine—but with a certain seraphic look, and infinite play of expression. The side-face was not strong, and the nose very slightly turned up.† His head was quite uncommonly small, covered with abundant wavy hair, dark brown and of a wild growth; his eyes were prominent, very open and fixed, hardly ever so much as winking, and very near-sighted.‡ He looked "preternaturally intelligent," or (as Lieutenant Williams said at a later date) "of most astonishing genius."§ His gestures were abrupt, yet often graceful; his clothes good but carelessly worn. He was a finished gentleman, and, as Mr. Hogg emphatically puts it, "a ladies' man"—the elect of dames and damsels. And certainly Shelley repaid this preference without stint; for nothing

* "Less a stoop," says Mr. Thornton Hunt, "than a peculiar mode of holding the head and shoulders; the face thrown a little forward, and the shoulders slightly elevated."

† Mr. Peacock (*Fraser's Magazine*, 1860, p. 103) points out that, in this respect, the ordinary portraits are not correct. A head of the painter Antonio Leisman, in the Uffizi Gallery at Florence, reminds him of Shelley. This is a dark-complexioned face, looking out, with a vivid and rather startled look, from under a broad-leaved hat. Mr. Trelawny (*Recollections*, p. viii.) considers that the portrait of which he gives a lithograph (and this edition an engraving), and which was painted by Clint from a water-colour by Lieutenant Williams now lost, is the only likeness of any decided value. According to Mr. Thornton Hunt, the portraits are particularly imperfect; and the "ordinarily received miniature resembles Shelley about as much as a lady in a book of fashions resembles real women." This gentleman says, however, that the features in the miniature are not unlike.

‡ Medwin says this last, and I suppose truly; Trelawny does not now remember it.

§ Trelawny, *Recollections*, p. 12.

is more manifest throughout his life and writings than the intense love he entertained for the feminine nature in its ideal, and in many approximate realizations of that ideal, and the delight with which he hailed any symptoms of superiority of intellect or faculty in women. I think he stands next to Shakspeare among great poets in love of the female character. His voice was peculiar, and Mr. Hogg found it at first "excruciating;" Mr. Peacock, "discordant;" Captain Medwin, "a cracked soprano;" Mr. Thornton Hunt, "a high natural counter-tenor," comparable to the Lancashire tone of speech. Its unpleasant quality, however, is ignored altogether by some authorities: and others, while admitting it, say that, although disagreeable when the poet was excited, the voice was of varied modulation, and, in reading poetry, not only good but wonderfully effective. His dominant passion at this time was argument, and his favourite recreation a country ramble. He was also now and henceforward an insatiable reader, occupying himself with books sometimes as much as sixteen hours out of the twenty-four, and under all circumstances of locality or environment. His diet was of the simplest, tending already strongly towards vegetarianism, which in the sequel (from the beginning of March 1812) he adopted absolutely, and persevered in for long periods of time together, though not without breaks now and then. Bread was his staple food; with water and tea to drink, and occasionally wine—but he could scarcely be reckoned among wine-drinkers at all, and sometimes totally rejected that beverage, and spirits (it may be said) invariably.

Omitting a host of other details (without which, however, no true picture can be given of Shelley in his supreme capacities, varied traits, and numerous peculiarities), a few words must here be said regarding his health. He considered himself a permanent and grievous invalid, of a consumptive habit, and afflicted by nervous and spasmodic attacks; he said also that he had ruined his health at Eton by swallowing in a fit of amorous dejection* arsenic or some mineral poison. Another account (which I find in no Shelleyan writer save Mr. Thornton Hunt†) is that "Shelley himself ascribed the injury from which he suffered to a pressure of the assassin's knee upon him in the

* Hogg gives this detail in one passage (vol. ii. p. 332). Miss Shelley says that her brother used to speak of the arsenic-swallowing as an accident, and Hogg himself says the same elsewhere.

† *Atlantic Monthly*, p. 185.

struggle" which he had had to wage with a mysterious assailant at Tanyrallt in 1813, and of which more anon. At one time, towards the end of that same year, Shelley had a fancy, no doubt a baseless one, that he was about to be visited with elephantiasis. Hogg, in his caustic way, makes light of all these statements and alarms; but it is, I think, only too abundantly clear from the evidence that such of them as related to facts, not inferences, to an actual and not a prospective state of body, were perfectly true. Mrs. Shelley speaks of her husband as a martyr to ill health all his life, and suffering constant pain; and other eye-witnesses testify to spasms which made him roll on the ground in agony, though without losing his gentleness of temper, which induced a deleterious use of opium (especially towards 1812), and which continually threatened to end fatally. Medwin, who thinks the disease must eventually have thus ended, speaks of it as nephritis, and of lithotomy as a dangerous remedy that might have been, but never was, tried; Trelawny regards "occasional spasms" as the only complaint, but without discussing their origin or extenuating their severity, and he intimates that the poet's long fasts brought on the attacks. The usual remedies adopted on the exigency of the moment were cold water and friction with the hand. Nothing is clearer from Shelley's own correspondence than that he was often tantalized by intervals of what he considered improved health, and perpetually thrown back again, and that he "suffered much of many physicians." Hogg, who was only in the way of seeing Shelley in his very early manhood, may not unnaturally have thought his complaints of ill health belied by the buoyant energies and activities of youth; but we shall surely have a very false conception of Shelley's life, in its course from week to week and from year to year, if we believe that Hogg came to a right conclusion, and that the poet, spite of his own repeated assertions, and those of persons who were constantly about him, lived in a condition of moderate physical comfort, instead of ever-recurring and often poignant suffering. The shadow of death was upon him oftener than once or twice, and the blight of pain, even when it dispersed, was ever in prospect. Mr. Trelawny, however, informs me that Shelley's health had, within the last few months of his life, during which he was less solitary than for some years preceding, improved so conspicuously that there was a good prospect of his living to an advanced

age. The physician Vaccà, whom he consulted on the subject after the poet's death, did not confirm the notion that the malady was of a nephritic character.

When he first went to Oxford, Shelley's tastes were chiefly for metaphysics, poetry, and chemistry; the latter he gradually slackened in, and at last dropped, and for mathematics he never showed any aptitude, though we find that he and his second wife were proposing to engage in this study together in 1820, and perhaps did so. As regards chemistry also, his taste still so far lingered that, at the end of 1811, in Keswick, he excited remark by experiments with hydrogen in his garden. A vivid flame was seen which alarmed the villagers; and his landlord gave Shelley notice to quit. "As his love of intellectual pursuits was vehement, and the vigour of his genius almost celestial, so were the purity and sanctity of his life most conspicuous." This is the testimony of Mr. Hogg; and, as he and Shelley became at once, and continued during their joint residence in Oxford, inseparable companions, no better evidence on the point can be attained or desired. It is true that Mr. Hogg, reporting a conversation with Mr. Shelley senior which took place very soon after the young men had left Oxford,* sets forth that he acquiesced in the paternal suspicion that Percy must be "rather wild," and the context is such as would naturally suggest that "wild" here signifies "rakish;" but, looking to Mr. Hogg's other statements on that subject, we must conclude that he only meant "harebrained" or "unmanageable." Mrs. Shelley speaks of Percy in the same strain, but with much less authority, as being "of the purest habits in morals" when he left Oxford; and so say other biographers, expressly or tacitly. But here again Mr. Thornton Hunt† is an exception. "Accident has made me aware of facts which give me to understand

* *Life of Shelley*, vol. i., p. 306.

† This gentleman, being then a mere child, was known to Shelley in England; and when a boy, saw him for two or three days in Italy. His reminiscences are interesting, and should be read by all Shelleyites; but of course, on such a question as Shelley's morals at Oxford, he has no *personal* testimony to give. The phrase which he uses, "Accident has made me aware of facts" &c., seems to point to some real discovery: if such there be, it needed not to be bolstered up by going to the passage in *Epipsychidion* (vol. ii., p. 83) which begins—

"There, one whose voice was venomed melody,"

an interpretation in accordance with this supposed discovery. The interpretation appears to me both servilely literal and forced; and though I have felt bound not to suppress Mr. Hunt's statement, I cannot profess to attach, as the case stands, much weight to it.

that in passing through the usual curriculum of a college life in all its paths, Shelley did not go scatheless; but that, in tampering with venal pleasures, his health was seriously and not transiently injured. The effect was far greater on his mind than on his body."

Shelley's third printed book, *St Irvyne, or the Rosicrucian, by a Gentleman of the University of Oxford*, was published towards the middle of December 1810, on the author's own account. It is stated to have shared the fate of *Zastrozzi* in being a good deal noticed by the press, and not to the advantage of its moral tone. This novel is even greater nonsense than *Zastrozzi*, and the truncated confusion and unmeaning of its close exceed anything that the sane reader could anticipate: to talk of its being either moral or immoral is proportionately out of place, although a certain inflammability of temperament may be traced in it. Though only published at the end of 1810, *St Irvyne* appears to have been written in 1809; for a letter from Shelley to Godwin, dated 10th January 1812, says that he had been acquainted with the *Political Justice* of that author more than two years, and that *St Irvyne* was composed before that period. The heroine's name, Megalena di Metastasio, is the most rememberable thing in this romance: her "symmetrical form," and the "sofa" on which she or somebody is sinking ever and anon, may also linger for awhile on the memory, when "the gigantic Ginotti" with his elixir of life, "the guilty Wolfstein," and other fantoccini, have gone the way of all dolls. Godwin's *St Leon* is reported to be mainly chargeable with the sin of procreating *St Irvyne*. The atmosphere of absurdity which envelopes one while the book itself is in question clears aside when we learn that, to the credit of the reading public, *St Irvyne* was quite a failure. The author had to confess, in August 1811, that he could not pay the bill of the publisher Stockdale;* and, with the daring unteachableness of youth, he suggested whether the copyright of a series of Moral and Metaphysical Essays might not do in lieu of pounds sterling. The bill, however, remained unpaid, and also the Essays unpublished. But I am anticipating.

Much about the same time that *St Irvyne* appealed from London to an irresponsive public (indeed I think it must have

* A MS. journal of Dr. Polidori, *penes me*, says that the amount of the debt was about £100; but that seems beyond the mark, and Mr. Garnett is probably right in supposing the sum to have been inconsiderable.

been rather before than after *), the author was making a less unsuccessful literary venture in Oxford. One day he showed Hogg some poems he was about to publish anonymously: Hogg read them, and expressed, with true friendliness and obviously correct judgment, the opinion that they were not good enough. Shelley returning to the charge, his Mentor observed that the verses ought only to be issued as burlesques, if at all; and made a few alterations in them the more clearly to bring out their extravagances. The idea pleased Shelley—a strong evidence of his substantial good sense, and freedom from pettish vanity; the two friends set to work together, introducing a greater and greater amount of absurdity into the verses; and Hogg started the notion of attributing them on the title-page to one Margaret Nicholson, a washerwoman who, having in a mad fit attempted the life of George the Third, was then passing the remainder of her days in a lunatic asylum. The Oxonians, however, chose to number her among the defunct, and to invent a nephew of hers, John Fitzvictor, as editor of her "Posthumous Fragments." The printer, Mr. Munday, who was to have issued the serious poems at Shelley's cost, finding them withdrawn and the burlesques substituted, was so taken with the idea that he volunteered for the risk of publication himself; and the book appeared forthwith,—a very thin volume, but luxurious in paper and type. The general tone of it is a glorifying of revolutionary personages and sentiments—carried out in a spirit which the least acute reader perceives to be excessive, but which one might hardly, were it not for the explanations offered by Mr. Hogg, recognize as wilfully burlesqued. The poems, indeed, had a considerable success among Oxford men, with whom tall talk about liberty was a fashion; they were accepted as the genuine and slightly *exalté* but not precisely incongruous outpourings of an untutored faculty. The true author or authors remained unsuspected, and had a right to chuckle over so daring and undetected an experiment on academic credulity. Beyond the circle of university men the book probably never went.

"Stupendous felicity,"† along with next to no supervision or guidance, was the lot of Shelley and Hogg at Oxford—so the

* *St Irvyne* was published on or just before 20th December 1810; and the title-page of *Margaret Nicholson* bears the date 1810. A facsimile reprint of the latter volume was issued very lately, an edition of but few copies.

† The letters published by Hogg show, however, that Shelley had during his Oxford time much mental suffering in connexion with Miss Grove.—See pp. lii., liii.

latter informs us. That career and that felicity were rapidly approaching their term. Shelley had been initiated by Dr. Lind into a habit of corresponding under some pseudonym with a number of people personally unknown to him on a variety of subjects—at first scientific, then metaphysical, moral, or what not. One of the persons he addressed was Felicia Browne, afterwards Mrs. Hemans, whose first volume of poems had attracted his admiration. He retained at Oxford the habit he had formed at Eton. In the course of their studies, Shelley and Hogg had made an abstract from Hume's Essays; a portion of which abstract Shelley got printed early in 1811, not for sale, and, in keeping up his speculative correspondence on questions of theology, was wont to enclose it in his letter, using it as a nucleus for further discussion. He would in fact profess to have come casually across the paper, and to be unable to refute its arguments: it was headed *The Necessity of Atheism*, and ended with a Q.E.D. It is reprinted, either verbatim or substantially, in the notes to *Queen Mab* (pp. 69-71). Such is the general purport of what Hogg says concerning this audacious pamphlet: but I think that he clearly pares the thing down rather too close, and that Shelley circulated his syllabus less with a view to mere convenience as a disputant, and more because he believed in and meant to champion the arguments it contained, than Mr. Hogg is willing to admit. Else why did he republish it in *Queen Mab*, with implied and indisputable adhesion to its terms? In this case as in others the honestest and boldest course is also the safest; and we shall do well to understand once for all that Percy Shelley had as good a right to form and expound his opinions on theology as the Archbishop of Canterbury had to his. Certainly Shelley differed from the Archbishop, and from several other students of and speculators on the subject, past and present; but, as there was no obligation on him to agree with all or any of them, so there is nothing to be explained away or toned down when we find that in fact he dissented. Except indeed that any man of mature years and reflection will admit that Shelley, aged eighteen and a half, showed a certain amount of youthful presumption in obtruding upon other people, known to be of a contrary and even bitterly contrary opinion, his then notions on subjects unfathomable by either himself or them. Shelley did not avow the authorship of the *Necessity of Atheism*, but neither did he take

any great pains to conceal it; he circulated the production among the college authorities—and it has even been said that he sent it to the Bench of Bishops with his name,* but that is transparently improbable or impossible.

On the 25th of March 1811 Shelley was summoned before the authorities, "our master and two or three of the fellows;" the pamphlet was produced to him; and he was required to declare whether or not he had written it. A tutor of a different college is supposed to have denounced him. He asked why such a question was put. The master simply repeated his former enquiry, and Shelley declined to answer it, insisting that it lay with his accusers to bring the charge home to him if they could. "Then you are expelled," replied the master; "and I desire you will quit the college early to-morrow morning at the latest." A regular sentence of expulsion, ready-written, under the seal of the college (the university was not directly concerned in the act), was then handed to him, and he departed. This is the substance of the account which Shelley gave to Hogg immediately after the event: to Peacock, at a later date, he said that he had made a defence, or denial of jurisdiction, in due elocutionary form, and (what is singular) he produced an Oxford newspaper containing the speech. The probability is that he (or else Hogg) used the license of a Thucydides or a Livy; and, not having delivered the oration at the time, invented it afterwards, and furnished the newspaper with the entire report.

Shelley was greatly agitated and distressed when he narrated his expulsion to Hogg, although he appears almost directly afterwards to have consoled himself with the distinction of martyrdom. The warmth of Hogg's feelings and friendship appeared conspicuously on this occasion. He wrote a short note to the master and fellows, demurring to their decision; was forthwith summoned to appear; was asked whether *he* had written the atheistic pamphlet; declined to reply, on the general ground of self-respect and resistance to browbeating; and was himself also expelled by a ready-written document. "The alleged offence was a contumacious refusal to disavow the imputed publication." On the following morning the two young men left Oxford.

Strong language has been used in condemnation of the college authorities; but he who, on the broad ground of freedom of

* Medwin, *Conversations with Byron*, p. 385.

opinion, claims latitude of thought and action for the atheist Shelley, will not deny the same to the Christian regulators of University College, Oxford. It appears to me clear that Shelley, known to be the author of *The Necessity of Atheism*, and refusing to recant, could not be allowed to remain a member of the college: a mild measure would have been to rusticate him, and to expel him was nothing extraordinarily harsh. The necessary subordination of a pupil to his teachers, moreover, makes it difficult to conclude that the authorities had no sort of right to require Shelley to affirm whether or not he had written the pamphlet; or that his refusal to say yes or no barred, in the absence of direct evidence against him, all further action on the part of the college. So far for the substance of what the authorities did: the manner is a different thing. All we know about the manner is what Shelley and Hogg respectively say of that which happened to themselves. If we could—which we cannot—assume these *ex parte* statements to be final and incapable of correction in detail, we should have to say that the manner was overbearing and precipitate, and probably it was so in very deed; and, as regards Hogg, there seems to have been no fair ground either for the severe sentence or for the summary procedure.

VI.—SHELLEY MARRIES HARRIETT WESTBROOK.

Shelley and Hogg came up to London, and took lodgings at No. 15 Poland Street, Oxford Street. At the end of about a month Hogg left for York, where he studied with a conveyancer. Of course consternation reigned in Field Place at the news of the expulsion. His father offered Percy a qualified sort of forgiveness on condition that he should reside at Field Place, drop all intercourse with Hogg for a while, and place himself under the control and instructions of some gentleman to be named by paternal authority. The precise answer returned is not on record; but the terms of capitulation failed—chiefly, it would seem, because unrestrained correspondence by letter between the two young men was their *sine quâ non*; and Percy, greatly to his concern, was excluded from his natural home, and left without any definite means of support. His sisters, for whom he had always shown much brotherly affection, mitigated his embarrassments by saving up pocket-money, and transmitting it to him; and he managed to rub on somehow. It was pro-

bably about this time that Shelley, with exquisite audacity, wrote to the Rev. Rowland Hill in an assumed name, proposing to preach to his congregation at Surrey Chapel. The eminent divine did not reply.

A young girl named Harriett Westbrook, a fellow-pupil of the Misses Shelley at a school at Clapham,* was in the habit of bringing round to Percy their sisterly remittances. She was not, however, altogether unknown to Shelley even before his expulsion from Oxford; he saw her first in January 1811, having taken her a present from his sister Mary, and a letter of introduction. This was at any rate as early as the 11th of that month, for he then ordered a copy of *St Irvyne* to be sent to her at her father's address, 10 Chapel Street, Grosvenor Square.†

Harriett was a charming girl, even a beauty; beauty enough to be designated for the part of Venus in some school *fête champêtre*—"with a complexion brilliant in pink and white, with hair quite like a poet's dream, and Bysshe's peculiar admiration," colour light brown. She was small and delicately made, and was now nearly or quite sixteen. Her father had been a hotel-keeper, and had for some years past retired from the business, with competent means. His house of entertainment, a place of some fashionable resort, was named "The Mount Street Coffeehouse," but was in fact a tavern. He looked Jewish; and both aspect and character co-operated in procuring him the nickname of "Jew Westbrook." The mother was a nonentity. Besides Harriett, there was an unmarried sister, perhaps twice as old, named Eliza; with dark eyes, dark and much-brushed hair, marks of the smallpox, and meagre figure. She also had a Jewish aspect.

Shelley's first flame for his cousin Miss Grove was now flickering in the socket. He indeed retained his love for her, and still did retain it for at any rate a month or two to come. But her father, though he had not interdicted the match, was not in favour of it; she herself had been raising objections to the

* Clapham, according to Shelley; Brompton, according to Lady Shelley; Wandsworth, according to Mr. Hogg; Balham Hill, according to Mr. Middleton, who terms the establishment "a second-rate boarding-school." Mrs. Fenning was the schoolmistress. As everything however remotely connected with Shelley is contested, even such a point as the spelling of Harriett's name has had its pros and cons. Perhaps a business letter from Shelley (Medwin, *Life*, vol. i. p. 373) may be taken as conclusive: "The maiden name is Harriett Westbrook, with two t's—Harriett." Hogg, however, is positive that she habitually *signed* only one *t*.

† This is the number, 10, given in Shelley's letter. Elsewhere it is 23 Chapel Street, and that is probably correct.

lover's increasingly sceptical opinions;* and somewhere about August of this year† she was the bride of another man—a gentleman of property, and inevitably "a clod of earth" in Shelley's eyes. His letters addressed to Mr. Hogg towards this time of suspense and dereliction expatiate much on his wounded feelings, the atrocities of intolerance, his suicidal proclivities, and the like—and indeed the family did perceive these proclivities to be to some extent real, and used to watch him anxiously when he went out with dog and gun.‡ One cannot, however, lay very much stress on his letters of the period in question. They are flighty, scattered, and excitable, in an extreme degree; and lend themselves equally to the supposition that he was thrown off his balance by all sorts of things, or that he overdid in words every passing matter that affected him. That he felt keenly at the time the loss of his beautiful cousin will be believed by every one who reflects on the character and constitution of the youth, and the probabilities of the case: but the biographers who *will* have it that this proved a lifelong sorrow to him are probably indulging themselves in applying to Shelley one of the pet resources of the memoir-writing tribe. No doubt, however, his disappointment with Miss Grove may have precipitated his dallyings or entanglements with Miss Harriett Westbrook.

Harriett was not only delightful to look at, but altogether most agreeable. She dressed with exquisite neatness and propriety; her voice was pleasant, and her speech cordial; her spirits were cheerful, and her manners good. She was well educated; a constant and agreeable reader; adequately accomplished in music. She had great fortitude, if it should not rather be called insensibility, of temperament.§ Perfectly frank

* "She abhors me as a sceptic—as what *she* was before!" (Letter of Shelley, 3d January 1811, in Hogg's *Life*, vol. i. p. 156).

† This date is named to me on good authority and very positively as being about correct: moreover, Lady Shelley says (*Shelley Memorials*, p. 13) that Miss Grove made another choice *after* her cousin's expulsion from Oxford. If this is correct, there is something strangely wrong about a letter of Shelley's published by Hogg under the date of 11th January 1811, in which the marriage of Miss Grove is announced as a fact already accomplished. From various points in connexion with that letter, and others amid which it is inserted, I find it extremely difficult to suppose that there has been, in this instance, any serious misdating on Hogg's part, and cannot at all account for the discrepancy.

‡ I find no hint of any sporting habits of Shelley in after life. He seems however to have done some fishing with Williams in the Bay of Lerici—Letter of Williams, 4th May 1822, in the *Essays and Letters*, vol. ii. p. 282. In the notes to *Queen Mab* he speaks of "the brutal pleasures of the chase."

§ See, in Hogg, vol. ii. p. 509, the account of her impassive demeanour during a surgical operation performed on her infant daughter Ianthe.

in character and manner, she became under Shelley's guidance perfectly "unprejudiced" in mind. This, however, took some while: Harriett was a Methodist in bringing-up, and felt at first a lively horror at learning that he was an atheist. In process of time, ethical ideas had a considerable attraction for her, religious ideas none at all. So far she seemed excellently fitted both to acquire and to retain a hold upon Shelley's affections. Yet there was in reality a fatal deficiency. When we have summed up all Harriett's attractions and merits—and they were neither few nor unsubstantial—we find that we have described at best a sweet young creature qualified to adorn any ordinary position in life; we have not described a poet's ideal, but only the simulacrum and external imitation of such. Depth of character or of mind—a real distinctive personality of whatever sort—was not included among Harriett Westbrook's qualifications. There was indeed no absolute reason why the void should make itself painfully felt; but, once felt by so ardent and penetrating a nature as Shelley's, it remained, neither to be filled nor forgotten—an aching void, a craving and persecuting want. Harriett was beautiful, amiable, good, accommodating, affectionate; but—deadly and at last unevadeable discovery—she was commonplace.

I fail to find any evidence that Shelley was ever deeply or even impulsively in love with Harriett; and have come across only one suggestion that there was anything like a romantic passion on her part either. He visited at her father's house, and took pleasure in inducing upon her mental faculties something that might be regarded as a conformity to his own daring and fervent tone of opinion; he escorted her back to school towards the end of April after an illness which had laid her up; lent a ready ear to tales, more or less genuine, of domestic coercion and incompatibilities. And it is easily open to conjecture that the family, though they may have done nothing underhand or entrapping, seconded to the utmost of their power any uncertain chances of a possible alliance with the grandson and eventual heir of a very wealthy baronet.

The letters of Shelley show that he was now eagerly bent upon promoting a match between Mr. Hogg and his eldest sister Elizabeth. She also wrote verses, of which some specimens, far from good, are preserved, and she painted besides: her mental gifts impressed him intermittently, but at times

strongly; at other times he gave her up as a victim of conventionality and prejudice.* The project, however, resulted in nothing—Shelley's advocacy being no doubt a minus quantity under the circumstances; and Elizabeth died unmarried in 1831. By the middle of May the inconvenient son was readmitted to Field Place, and came to an arrangement with his father, under which he was to receive an allowance of £200 per annum, with liberty to choose his own place of abode. His maternal uncle Captain Pilfold, residing at Cuckfield, a naval officer who had seen service under Nelson at the Nile and Trafalgar, exerted a conciliatory influence; and stands out indeed as a very pleasant figure amid the various family complications which Percy's erratic course gave rise to. The latter next, from about the beginning of July, paid a visit of two or three weeks to his cousin Mr. Thomas Grove, at Cwm Elan, Rhayader, in Radnorshire.

A storm was now brewing in the Westbrookian teapot; and the liquor boiled over into Shelley's lips, guided thereto by steady female manipulation. The details appear in print, in letters addressed by Shelley to Hogg from Cwm Elan, undated, and seemingly misplaced in the printing. Presumably they were written towards the middle or end of July.†

During Shelley's stay at Cwm Elan, Eliza and Harriett Westbrook were going to a house of their father at Aberystwith. Percy expected to meet them there, the father having invited him. The letter printed next after the one which names this fact contains the following passage:—"Your jokes on Harriett Westbrook amuse me. It is a common error for people to fancy others in their own situation; but, if I know anything about love, I am *not* in love. I have heard from the Westbrooks, both of whom I highly esteem." The next following letter is momentous. "I shall certainly come to York, but

* One of his letters, dated 4th July 1811, printed by Hogg (vol. i. p. 411) claims attentive pondering by the student of Shelley's life. A very grave conjecture might be built upon its terms; but I suspect that, owing to Hogg's slovenly editorship, there is a serious misprint in it, and shall leave it without further comment. This course I adopt not because the question raised is "painful," for that I consider no adequate ground for biographic reticence in the case of so important a man as Shelley; but because the document which raises the question is unsafe—and one cannot afford to rummage cupboards for skeletons, if a strong presumption exists that the skeletons themselves are only plaster of Paris.

† Lady Shelley (*Shelley Memorials*, p. 22) refers to two of these letters, and says she is "not able to guarantee" their authenticity. No doubt Lady Shelley speaks advisedly: but a biographer who knows nothing to the contrary must accept as genuine letters printed by Hogg as having been addressed to himself, and by himself received at the date of the transactions.

Harriett Westbrook will decide whether now or in three weeks. Her father has persecuted her in a most horrible way by endeavouring to compel her to go to school. She asked my advice. . . . I advised her to resist. She wrote to say that resistance was useless, but that she would fly with me; and threw herself upon my protection. We shall have £200 a-year: when we find it run short, we must live, I suppose, upon love. Gratitude and admiration, all demand that I should love her for ever. We shall see you at York. I will hear your arguments for matrimonialism, by which I am now almost convinced." The upshot was that Shelley returned to London, where he lodged with his cousin, Mr Grove, a surgeon; and in August or September 1811, after some half-dozen stolen interviews with Harriett, eloped with her from her father's house.* He had been much moved by finding her pining, and suffering in health; and learning, from her lips or her not less expressive silence, that love for him was the cause. They went off straight to Edinburgh, and there became man and wife according to the law of Scotland.

Until we reject the above-cited letters as spurious, or as written with an intention to deceive, we must conclude from them that the advances, immediately leading to elopement, came from Harriett to Shelley, and not from Shelley to Harriett, and were founded on complaints of domestic tyranny seemingly exaggerated or frivolous; that Harriett (a schoolgirl of sixteen, hardly more than a child, and lately philosophized out of the ordinary standard of propriety) was quite ready to be Shelley's mistress,† and professedly—not perhaps in truth—aspired to nothing higher; and that it was wholly and solely the poet's strong sense of honour which induced him, and this in the teeth of some pet theories of his own, to make her at once his wife.‡ Consequently, instead of pulling long

* I do not find the exact date stated: it was either the last week in August or the first in September; see Hogg, *Life*, vol. i. p. 425. Mr. C. H. Grove, who saw Shelley and Harriett off from London, inclines to September (vol. ii. p. 554.)

† So at least I interpret the phrase "threw herself upon my protection;" which phrase, however, we must in fairness recollect, is at the utmost Shelley's summing-up of Harriett's expressions, and not the *ipsissima verba* of Harriett herself.

‡ The MS. diary of Dr. Polidori, written while he was in habits of daily intercourse with the Shelleys on the shores of the Lake of Geneva in 1816 (30th May) makes a noticeable statement which, though certainly not to be accepted as conclusive, deserves to be borne in mind. The primary likelihood is that the diarist made his jotting direct from what he had heard Shelley say—or at farthest from what Byron reported to him as said by Shelley.—"Gone through much misery, thinking he was dying. Married a girl for the mere sake of letting her have the jointure that would

faces or shaking middle-aged heads over this escapade of a youth just nineteen years of age, we shall do much better to regard it as a beautiful example of chivalry shining through juvenility; or, if the calculating habit is still strong upon us, we may compute what percentage of faultlessly Christian young heirs of opulent baronets would have acted like the atheist Shelley, and married a retired hotel-keeper's daughter offering herself as a mistress. To deny that the act was foolish would be absurd under any circumstances, and doubly so when we reflect upon the ultimate issue of it to Shelley and Harriett themselves: let us then distinctly recognize that it was foolish, and no less distinctly that it was noble.

VII.—MARRIED LIFE WITH HARRIETT.

The bridegroom and bride took groundfloor lodgings in George Street, Edinburgh, a handsome house on the left side of the recently built street, and were soon joined there by Hogg. The poet had borrowed £25 from Mr. Medwin (his connexion by marriage, a solicitor at Horsham, and father of his schoolfellow and subsequent biographer), but without letting him into the secret of the approaching elopement: he was expecting also to receive £75 at the end of the month. All supplies from his father were now cut off. But Mr. Westbrook made some allowance to the young couple which has been stated (probably very much over-stated) at £200 per annum; it was clearly not always forthcoming in time of need. Besides this, Shelley raised money on his expectations from time to time; and must be viewed as now living in a state of permanent embarrassment—not far removed, however, from a modest sufficiency, save at moments of exceptional pressure. In a letter of 5th July 1812 he speaks of himself as having an income of £400 per annum from his relatives; but there is no ground for thinking that by any means as much did really come in to him year by year during his first marriage.

accrue to her. Recovered. Found he could not agree. Separated." The more obvious motive for marrying—that of avoiding obloquy to the woman, and impediments in any future effort to do good—is distinctly put forward in a letter of Shelley to Godwin, 28th January 1812 (Hogg, vol. ii. pp. 63-4), and in other letters that I have seen, in which Shelley treats the whole affair as natural and right, save only the act of formal marriage—a truckling to custom which needs and receives reiterated apology. The statement of Dr. Polidori that the poet in early youth expected a very short lease of life is fully confirmed by a remark made by Mrs Shelley (p. 91) relative to *Queen Mab*, and the period, 1812-13, when it was written. "Ill-health made him believe that his race would soon be run; that a year or two was all he had of life."

In October,* Hogg returned to York, and the Shelleys accompanied him: they all three took lodgings with some dingy milliners of advanced age—the Misses Dancer, in Coney Street. Bysshe (he was designated by this name in his own family, and as yet by Harriett) went to London and Cuckfield to negotiate with his father. For the while, nothing could mollify the offended parent, and the poet returned to York: but towards the beginning of 1812 the allowance of £200 was renewed, accompanied by a gracious message from Mr. Shelley senior "that his sole reason for so doing was to prevent his son's cheating strangers." This meagre but convenient result closed a series of attempts at coming to terms, in the course of which Bysshe gave a noble proof of his ideal purity of principle. About the beginning of December Captain Pilfold told him of a meditated proposal from his father and grandfather of an immediate income for him of £2000 per annum (Shelley wrote of it as a capital fund of £120,000) on condition that he would entail the estate on his eldest son, or, in default of issue, on his younger brother John. This Shelley rejected, not only with peremptory decision, but with consuming indignation. That *he* should be supposed capable of entailing all this "command over labour" upon a possible fool or scoundrel!

Meantime, and just before his return to York, Miss Westbrook had arrived there as pre-arranged, and had taken possession of the establishment, and especially of Harriett, who had always been much under her control, and looked up to her with a long-confirmed habit of trustful and almost daughterly affection. Besides, she was quite destitute of housewifery.—Shelley found himself at once an infinitesimal quantity; Harriett was a cipher, and Hogg a zero. Eliza Westbrook, overruling everything that everybody else wanted to do, solicitous for Harriett's hitherto unapparent nerves, dominating her by the terrible query "What would Miss Warne say?"—and brushing her own harsh but glossy black hair for hours in her bedroom—is an inimitable portrait limned by the equally skilful and ruthless hand of Mr. Hogg. That she may have meant well he allows; and more than this will not readily be conceded by the reader who regards Shelley, and his comfort and proper position in his own house, as of somewhat more consequence

* Hogg gives the date as "the end of October:" I believe it was really the beginning of that month, or perhaps the end of September.

than the managing and fussing propensities of this mature spinster.* Her undisputed function as regulator of the household economy appears in the small fact that, when she was soon afterwards with the Shelleys in Dublin, Eliza kept the common stock of money in a blind corner of her dress, and told it out as occasion required.

About the beginning of November, Shelley, with his wife and sister-in-law (the latter probably supplying the funds on this occasion), went off to Keswick, in the Lake-country of Cumberland: scenery and economy both attracted him thither. They lived partly in a small furnished house, Chesnut Cottage, at a rent of thirty shillings a week, which was afterwards reduced. The Duke of Norfolk (through whom Shelley had already tried to make terms with his father) invited all three to Graystoke, and did his best, in a kindly and handsome spirit, to promote their comfort. Southey also called upon Shelley; and they met—to use the elder poet's own phrase—"upon terms, not of friendship indeed, but of mutual good will." Southey admired Shelley's talents at this time, and believed his heart to be kind and generous. The writings of the future Laureate, as likewise of Wordsworth and Coleridge, and Landor's *Gebir*, were among those for which Shelley, in early youth, had a particular predilection: of the older English poetry he then knew very little. By the time of his sojourn in Cumberland, however, Shelley had come to regard Southey—not as yet Wordsworth—as guilty of tergiversation, and this feeling increased into indignant disgust, before his departure, in consequence of some fulsome adulation of George the Third which the author of *Wat Tyler* had just been publishing: but in personal intercourse Shelley prized him, and could even, soon after their first meeting, speak of him as "a great man." De Quincey was another casual acquaintance at Keswick. Here the Shelleys and Miss Westbrook remained till the beginning of February 1812.† Bysshe could not be long anywhere without having an adventure of some sort. Accordingly, to accept his own account contained in a letter of 26th January, a robbery had just then been attempted on his person, and he was only saved from undefined

* Miss Westbrook married eventually, I am informed.

† I have seen a letter of Shelley's, written from Keswick, inscribed outside "Single sheet, by God," for every postman to read. He had had reason to consider himself overcharged by the post under the old regulations concerning single or double sheets. This is exquisitely Shelleyan.

ill-consequences by happening to fall *within* the limits of his house. The same letter mentions (for the first time, I think) that he had been taking laudanum medicinally; possibly in this instance—and not in this one alone—the laudanum and the idea of the perilous adventure may have been connected as cause and effect.

From Keswick, on the 3rd of January, Shelley began one of his wonted volunteered correspondences—this time with the eminent publicist and novelist William Godwin. Soon before leaving Eton he had read that author's *Political Justice;* and he looked upon the book as having exercised an important influence on his character, rousing him from merely romantic notions, and showing that he had duties to perform. Shelley was now, spite of some dissuasion from Godwin (who evidently responded to his letters in a friendly and judicious spirit, though the answers are not on record), meditating a journey to Dublin, with a view to furthering Catholic Emancipation and the Repeal of the Union; he had already prepared an address to the Irish people. He was also writing (as one of his printed letters expresses it) "An Enquiry into the Causes of the Failure of the French Revolution to benefit Mankind." From other sources of information I learn that this was in fact a tale or novel, by name *Hubert Cauvin:* he had written about two hundred pages of it by the 2nd of January, but in all probability it was never finished. One of his assertions to Godwin regarding his father is very startling. "My father . . . wished to induce me by poverty to accept of some commission in a distant regiment; and, in the interim of my absence, to prosecute the pamphlet [the *Necessity of Atheism*], that a process of outlawry might make the estates, on his death, devolve to my younger brother." He speaks of it as an entailed estate of £6000 per annum; of this, it seems, the fee-simple vested, upon his father's death, in Shelley, who could dispose of it by will,—and, besides the entailed estate, there was other property to a similar amount which could be cut off from Percy. From his statement above quoted, we may perhaps assume, as a fact in Shelley's career, that his father, after the Oxford *esclandre*, had wished him to enter the army; but for the rest Hogg's terse observation is indisputable. "It is only in a dream that the prosecution, outlawry, and devolution of the estate, could find a place. . . . It would have been too large a requisition upon the reader's credulity to ask him to credit them

in the father of Zastrozzi or of St Irvyne." Fortunately for himself, Hogg had probably not read *St Irvyne*, or he would have found that that name designates a locality, and not a man.

The Irish project, at any rate, was "not all a dream." Shelley arrived in Dublin, with Harriett and Eliza, about the 24th of February 1812, after a tedious and stormy voyage which had driven them to the North of Ireland. His address was 7 Lower Sackville Street, and afterwards 17 Grafton Street. He at once issued, with his name, his *Address to the Irish People*—a mean-looking pamphlet of twenty-two pages, for which, it appears, no publisher would venture to be responsible. The edition was 1500 copies. Shelley pitched his diction in a purposely low key, to suit his readers; the tone is juvenile as well as commonplace, but does not tend to advocating any forcible or illegal acts—on the contrary, there are the usual tritenesses about the violence which destroyed the French Revolution, and which should on no account be imitated by the Irish patriots, about a peaceful progress towards perfectibility, and the like. The pamphlet had a considerable sale, and met with some newspaper eulogy. It was Shelley's custom to throw copies from his balcony to passers-by who looked "likely" recipients, and to distribute the pamphlet in the street: on one occasion, walking out with Harriett, he popped a copy into a lady's hood, making his bride "almost die of laughing." The *Address* was followed by another pamphlet, of eighteen pages—*Proposals for an Association of those Philanthropists who, convinced of the inadequacy of the moral and political state of Ireland to produce benefits which are nevertheless attainable, are willing to unite to accomplish its Regeneration. By Percy B. Shelly.* Here again the youthful agitator thought he had guarded against the dangers and disadvantages of associations (much enforced by Godwin) by providing for the publicity of meetings, and the optional secession of members. Nothing, however, save total abandonment of the Irish scheme, could satisfy the author of *Political Justice:* so, about the middle of March, Shelley, who most sincerely reverenced Godwin from afar, withdrew his pamphlets, and prepared to retire from the scene and field of Hibernian politics, profoundly moved by the misery and ignorance he had witnessed in Dublin. Meanwhile he had attended in person at least one political meeting, on the 28th of February, in Fishamble Street Theatre, with a view to the

foundation of his Society of Philanthropists: and here he spoke for more than an hour in the presence of O'Connell and other celebrities.* Shelley was truly impressive in discussion, or in grave and elevated conversation: Medwin says "in eloquence he surpassed all men I have ever conversed with," and according to Trelawny "he left the conviction on the minds of his audience that, however great he was as a poet, he was greater as an orator." Even "his *ordinary* conversation is akin to poetry," says the loving Lieutenant Williams. But it is probable that in this instance in Dublin he did not shine as a speaker. Chief Baron Woulfe recollected his speaking "at a meeting of the Catholic Board" (perhaps the same occasion), pausing now and anon, and delivering his slow sentences as so many disconnected aphorisms. It may also have been at the Fishamble Street gathering that Shelley claimed for Protestants rights not inferior to those of Catholics—and no doubt they already enjoyed much more than an equality: but the Catholic audience were savage, and silenced and threatened their undaunted instructor. This did not augment his Irish enthusiasm; neither did personal intercourse with the renowned Mr. Curran, for whom Godwin had sent him a letter of introduction, and whom he found a sufficiently prurient and buffoon-like old gentleman—qualities always and peculiarly distasteful to Shelley. In after years, an obscene story, or ribaldry of set purpose, would suffice to make him rise from his chair, and leave the room. He stayed in Dublin long enough, it would seem, to receive a hint from the police that his absence would be a convenience; long enough also to begin, with "a literary friend," a voluminous History of Ireland, of which 250 pages had been printed by the 20th of March. Nothing further is known of this performance. He had likewise had a project of taking a share in a newspaper.

Somewhere about the end of March the Shelleys and Eliza left Dublin. They passed through the Isle of Man; ranged about North and South Wales in search of a residence; paused at and again left a "haunted" house at Nant-Gwillt near Rhayader; flitted through Cwm Elan; and at last, from the 5th of July, settled down for a short while at Lymouth in North Devonshire. They had a small unpretending cottage in a beautiful locality. At the end of August they left. Godwin,

* The speech is to be found in the *Dublin Evening Post* for 29th February 1812.

after much urging, came down on the 18th of September to pay them a visit, only to find they had vanished. His sympathies and intellectual curiosity had been greatly excited by the letters Shelley had addressed to him.

The next and rather less brief sojourn was at Tanyrallt, near Tremadoc in Carnarvonshire, where Shelley hired a commodious cottage or country-house belonging to a gentleman named Madocks, who was engaged on extensive works for reclaiming land from the sea—several thousand acres. Here, and apparently at Lymouth previously, Shelley, with his usual unreflecting enthusiasm of goodwill, received an additional inmate—a Miss Elizabeth Hitchener. This lady was a deist and republican, who kept a school in Sussex, at Hurstpierpoint, and whom Shelley invited away from the sphere of her operations with no motive seemingly save admiration of her independence of mind—an admiration which, indeed, for some months before and after his elopement with Harriett, exceeded all bounds of proportion and sound judgment. It is to be presumed that he supported her at Tanyrallt, and he certainly subsidized her afterwards: for, as "the Brown Demon" (such is the sole title which this estimable person obtains in printed Shelleyan records) proved sovereignly distasteful to Eliza, and hence to Harriett and Shelley himself, the connexion was severed in November of this same year, and Shelley felt bound to indemnify her to some extent for her damaged prospects. This was not now from love; for he disposes of the Brown Demon in one monumental sentence —"What would hell be, were such a woman in heaven?" A much more signal instance of his splendid generosity and public large-heartedness occurred about the same time. An uncommonly high tide broke through the embankment of Mr. Madocks's earthworks, to the great dismay and peril of the cottagers. Shelley went about personally soliciting subscriptions (a task which was likely to be especially unpleasant to him, as his letters speak of his neighbours as being in a high degree bigoted and prejudiced), and himself headed the list with £500—much more than a year's precarious income. He also hurried up to London early in November to push the subscription there, and had the satisfaction of saving the work. Here, after a long interval in which they had lost sight of each other, he again saw Hogg, who was now studying in the Temple: here also he made Godwin's personal acquaintance, and stayed awhile in his

house. A letter of 19th February 1813, written to Mr. Hookham the publisher, after the poet's return to Tanyrallt, marks another act of genuine liberality, though only on a small scale. He was "boiling with indignation" at the tyrannical sentence of fine and imprisonment (£1000 and two years) passed upon Leigh Hunt and his brother John for an alleged libel* on the Prince Regent printed in the *Examiner;* and he proposed a public subscription to pay off the fine, and sent for the purpose £20, which appears to have been about all the money he had available at the time even for his own requirements. The Hunts honourably declined to avail themselves of the proposal, and of a subsequent offer of £100 from Shelley during their imprisonment. This was not the first time that Shelley had had something to do with Leigh Hunt; for, on the occasion of the failure of a government prosecution against the *Examiner*, he had written to him from Oxford (2nd March 1811), without any personal acquaintance, "to submit to his consideration a scheme of mutual safety and mutual indemnification for men of public spirit and principle." By the date of the sentence for libel he had met Hunt, but not on an intimate footing.

The residence at Tanyrallt came to an end in a startling and mysterious manner. On the night of the 26th of February an attempt to assassinate Shelley in his own house was made, or was supposed or alleged to have been made. For some unexplained reason, Shelley, on retiring to bed that night, had expected to have occasion for pistols, and had loaded a brace. Hearing a noise in one of the parlours, he got out of bed with his pistols, and saw a man who fired upon him. A struggle ensued, in which Shelley twice returned the fire, with dubious result: the ruffian, vowing outrage and murder on Eliza and Harriett, ran away. But he returned about three hours afterwards, and shot through Shelley's night-gown and the window-curtain; another struggle ensued, with sword and pistols; a newly-engaged Irish

* There is nothing like understanding and attending to the *facts* of a case, whichever direction they may bear in. It has often been said that the attack made by Leigh Hunt upon the Prince Regent was some slight affair of ridicule or depreciation; calling him "a fat Adonis of *sixty*," according to Hogg. This is quite untrue: the assault was as virulent as it was well-deserved. One phrase no doubt is "that . . . this 'Adonis in loveliness' was a corpulent gentleman of *fifty*;" but (besides other severities) the very next sentence has anything but a bantering tone:—"In short, that this 'delightful, blissful, wise, pleasurable, honourable, virtuous, true, and immortal Prince' was a violator of his words, a libertine over head and ears in debt and disgrace, a despiser of domestic ties, the companion of gamblers and demireps, a man who has just closed half a century without one single claim on the gratitude of his country or the respect of posterity."

man-servant named Daniel arrived, and the assassin again made off. Such is the account given by Harriett in a letter to Mr. Hookham, who had been implored to send funds to enable the Shelleys to quit their Cambrian Castle Dangerous, and retreat to Dublin.*

The Shelleys went to "the solicitor-general of the county," and had an investigation set on foot. No trace could ever be found of the assassin. The Shelleyan theory was that a certain Mr. Leeson,† a man whom they avoided as "malignant and cruel to the greatest degree," was at the bottom of the affair. The Leesonian and irreverent theory was at least as tenable *primâ facie*—viz., "that it was a tale of Mr. Shelley's to impose upon the neighbouring shopkeepers, that he might leave the country without paying his bills." People in general, along with Messrs. Hogg, Madocks, and Peacock, and Mr. Browning among later analysts, have disbelieved the story, and attributed it to an excited imagination, or nerves unstrung by laudanum: Hogg suggests that the Irishman Daniel may possibly have had something to do with it. The night was one of rain, and "wind as loud as thunder," which may have started, in Shelley's perturbed brain, the notion of pistol snappings: it is a fact, however, that *some* pistol was really fired. One singular point (hardly hitherto dwelt on) is that Shelley *expected*, on going to bed, to need his firearms: if the expectation was a mere fantasy, the subsequent assumed actual need of them may have been the same. But Lady Shelley and Mr. Thornton Hunt discover no ground for scepticism: "Miss Westbrook was also in the house at the time, and often, in after years, related the circumstance as a frightful fact."‡ This last evidence is of great weight, and must give us pause before we dismiss the whole story as delusive. Miss Westbrook became one of Shelley's bitterest enemies, and certainly would not, out of any consideration for him, have upheld "in after years" his account of the matter. But it is conceivable that, having at first committed herself to a figment, she found it impossible afterwards, for her own sake if not for Shelley's, to recant. Here I must leave

* A preliminary brief and agitated letter from Shelley to Hookham is dated 3d March in Hogg's *Life*—in the *Shelley Memorials* it is given without any date. I think "3d March" must be incorrect; for it seems clear the missive was dispatched immediately after the event, and, if so, on 27th February.

† This is the name in the *Shelley Memorials:* in Hogg's *Life* it is Luson.

‡ *Shelley Memorials*, p. 56.

this still debateable mystery, not having any such space as would be needed for really setting forth its evidences for and against.

A short stay in an uninviting house, No. 35 Great Cuffe Street, Dublin, preceded a tour to Killarney, uniting enjoyment with discomfort—more satisfactory at any rate to the Shelleys and Miss Westbrook than to Hogg, who, arriving in Dublin by invitation, learned that they had left for the lake-trip. And, when Shelley and Harriett (in brief respite from Eliza, who remained at Killarney) returned on purpose to the Cork Hotel, Dublin, on the 31st of March, Hogg had started back to London. These little incidents may stand as a sample of the hurried and unconcerted movements in which Shelley was continually engaging. The spouses left Dublin again about the 4th of April; and why they had ever gone thither, unless to be far from Tanyrallt, or as a stage towards a holiday at Killarney, is not apparent. They experienced a storm near the Isle of Man, when Shelley, in the judgment of the skipper who would receive no payment from him, saved the ship and its crew of three by his energetic and judicious exertions.* They reached the house of Mr. Westbrook in Chapel Street in May. Eliza soon joined them in London, where they took to living in hotels for awhile; but she was apparently not just now a fixed member of their household. They afterwards lodged in Halfmoon Street; seeing much of Hogg, and of other society, including some literary acquaintances—nothing of Shelley's own relatives. Somewhere about this time, but presumably a little later, Shelley indulged his wife in a whim to set up a carriage; and the culpable extravagance was very near sending him to prison for debt.

On or about the 28th of June Harriett was delivered of her first child, Ianthe Eliza,† at Cooke's Hotel, Dover Street: it was a very easy confinement. There was some blemish in one of Ianthe's eyes; her mother did not nurse her, but handed her over to the cares of a wet-nurse whom Shelley disliked; and Eliza, whom he was now getting to loathe, was continually

* It is not quite clear *when* this incident happened. Medwin (*Life*, vol. i. p. 177) says it was in November, and after the *first* Dublin sojourn; in the *Shelley Papers* he says it was in 1813 or 1814. If it was really in 1813, it must have been in going to or returning from the *second* Dublin sojourn. It cannot have been in 1814, nor yet in the month of November. Perhaps the whole story is apocryphal.

† Now Mrs. Esdaile.

hovering and busying herself (no doubt with genuine good feeling) about the infant. These circumstances were all vexatious to Shelley, and it has even been said that he exhibited no interest in the baby; but this is distinctly disproved by Mr. Peacock. "He was extremely fond of it, and would walk up and down a room with it in his arms for a long time together, singing to it a monotonous melody of his own making, which ran on the repetition of a word of his own coining. His song was 'Yáhmani, Yáhmani, Yáhmani, Yáhmani.' It did not please *me*; but, what was more important, it pleased the child, and lulled it when it was fretful. Shelley was extremely fond of his children: he was pre-eminently an affectionate father." In later years we read of his playing for hours with his last child Percy on the floor. Mr. Trelawny, however, tells me that (at least within his experience) Shelley was not exactly or demonstratively "fond of children," in the ordinary sense of the term.

VIII.—QUEEN MAB.

Among the various writings of Shelley which I have hitherto had occasion to mention—and there were many besides—the only one having any moderate degree of literary merit is the *Necessity of Atheism*. We have next to contemplate him as a poet taking a certain actual rank among poets; no high rank as yet, but still one which is not to be wholly ignored. The poem of *Queen Mab* places him in this position. He began this work in the spring or summer of 1812, subsequent to his first return from Ireland:* it was finished in February 1813, after which he compiled the lengthy notes. He had at first thought of publishing it; but eventually limited himself to a private edition of 250 copies, for which he bespoke fine paper, thinking that, though the aristocrats would not read it themselves, "it was probable their sons and daughters would." Shelley sent copies to many writers of the day—to Byron among others. The thorough genuineness of his character and feelings appears in the fact that, in transmitting *Queen Mab* to the all-famous author of *Childe Harold*, Shelley wrote a letter detailing all the accusations he had heard against him, and saying

* So says Shelley in a letter quoted in the *Shelley Memorials*, p. 39. But there may be some nucleus of truth in Medwin's assertion (*Life*, vol. i., p. 53) that the poem had been begun, as a mere imaginative effusion, as early as about the autumn of 1809, and that it was only after his expulsion from Oxford that Shelley continued it into an attack on religious and other systems.

that, if these were not true, he would like to make his acquaintance.* The letter, however, did not reach Byron, though the book did, and was read by him with some admiration. Indeed, being very soon pirated and made purchasable, it produced a certain general sensation and impression. It was again pirated in 1821.

For the speculative qualities of *Queen Mab* and its notes I have to refer the reader to the book itself; only further observing that, while it is declaredly atheistic in the ordinary sense, and highly hostile to theologic Christianity, it has also a certain element of pantheism, and is decidedly not the writing of a self-consistent materialist, or disbeliever in spirit as something other than a function of body. The ardour of Shelley for his own beliefs, and his unreasoning youthfulness of self-confidence, made him actually imagine that such a performance as *Queen Mab* was capable of producing a change in the ideas and practices of society. He seems to have retained notions of this sort up to the year 1816 or 1817, when he became both less sanguine and less aggressive—never less nobly and enthusiastically self-devoted. As to the poetical merits of *Queen Mab*, I think the ordinary run of criticism is at fault. Some writers go to the ridiculous excess of speaking of it as not only a grand poem, but actually the masterpiece of its author; and even those who stop far short of this expatiate in loose talk about its splendid ideal passages, gorgeous elemental imagery, and the like. The fact is that *Queen Mab* is a juvenile production in the fullest sense of the term—as nobody knew better than Shelley himself a few years afterwards; and furthermore (unless I am much mistaken) the *most* juvenile and unremarkable section of it is the ideal one. The part which has some considerable amount of promise, and even of positive merit at times, is the declamatory part—the passages of flexible and sonorous blank verse in which Shelley boils over against kings or priests, or the present misery of the world of man, and in acclaiming augury of an æra of regeneration. These passages, with all their obvious literary crudities and imperfections, are in

* Moore's *Life of Byron*, vol. ii., p. 22. Moore states this distinctly as a fact: but there is another story (Medwin, *Life of Shelley*, vol. i., p. 237), that Shelley, on reaching Sécheron in 1816, wrote to Byron detailing the accusations made against Shelley himself, and saying that he, if Byron disbelieved them, would like to become known to him. I should incline to suppose this the true version of the story, but that I find no sort of confirmation of it in Dr. Polidori's MS. journal.

their way of real mark, and not easily to be overmatched by other poetic writing of that least readable sort, the didactic-declamatory.

The reader will observe that the name Shelley bestowed on his first-born daughter, Ianthe, is the same which he had already appropriated to the mortal heroine of his poem.

IX.—HARRIETT SHELLEY AND MARY GODWIN.

Shelley's next removal was into a quiet street in Pimlico, for the more especial purpose of being near the Boinville family, with whom he had become intimate. Mrs. Boinville was a lady past middle age, but more than commonly young in general appearance, save for her snow-white hair: hence Shelley named her Maimuna, after a personage in Southey's *Thalaba*. He regarded her as "the most admirable specimen of a human being he had ever seen," though "it was hardly possible for a person of the extreme subtlety and delicacy of Mrs. Boinville's understanding and affections to be quite sincere and constant." She had a daughter, Cornelia, married to Mr. Newton, a vegetarian enthusiast whose views had a considerable influence at this time upon Shelley—as testified in the notes to *Queen Mab*. The society that he met at Mrs. Boinville's was of the free-thinking and levelling kind, and included no doubt its full proportion of crotchet-mongers and pretenders: it was highly distasteful to Hogg, and after a while not altogether congenial to Shelley himself, supremely free as he was from any feeling of exclusiveness or social disdain.

He was now in pecuniary straits,* with no resources beyond the £200 from his father; and, with a view to economy, he retreated, before the end of July, to a small cottage named High Elms, at Bracknell in Berkshire, where the Newtons, with their family of five children, stayed with him awhile. Necessity, restlessness, or some other cause, soon dictated a further retreat; and in the autumn the Shelleys, with Mr. Thomas Love Peacock in their company, revisited Edinburgh.† This gentle-

* See two important letters, from Mr. Shelley senr., 26th May 1813, and from Percy Shelley a few days later, published in *Notes and Queries*, 2nd ser., vol. vi., p. 405. The father, learning that Percy (whom he addresses as "My dear boy") has not changed his speculative opinions, finally declines all further communication; and the poet (addressing the Duke of Norfolk) spiritedly says: "I am not so degraded and miserable a slave as publicly to disavow an opinion which I believe to be true."

† Perhaps it was now that Shelley saw Matlock. A letter to Mr. Peacock (22nd July 1816) shows that he had been there at *some* time, and, it might be inferred, in Peacock's company.

man had been known to Shelley just before the latter went to Tanyrallt: Mrs. Newton describes him at this period as "a cold scholar, who, I think, has neither taste nor feeling." But Mrs. Newton may have regarded with some prejudice a gentleman who, seconded by Harriett, laughed heartily at the intellectual nostrum-vendors who abounded in the Newtonian regions. At any rate, Shelley, who at one time of unprosperous fortune to Mr. Peacock, made him an allowance of £100 a year, continued, as long as he remained in England, to see him with predilection, and kept up with him from Italy a correspondence equally friendly and interesting. He valued his abilities highly, and relished the peculiar tone of witty causticity and badinage in action evidenced in such works as *Nightmare Abbey*, in which the character of Scythrop presents some traits of Shelley, and was so understood by himself.

About the end of 1813 Shelley was back in London; and early in 1814 he published *A Refutation of Deism*, a dialogue between Eusebes and Theosophus in 101 pages. Hogg gives a short quotation from it, treating on the extraneous subject of vegetarianism: he is the only author who mentions the pamphlet, and probably almost the only human being who ever owned or inspected a copy of it. No doubt the refutation undertaken by Shelley is not directed against "Deism" as that term is technically used to indicate anti-Christianity—but against "Theism" of any sort. What he champions must be something *less* than Deism, not anything *more*.

Hitherto nothing appears in the documents of Shelley's life to show that he was on other than affectionate and pleasant terms with Harriett. We find in his letters the following expressions:—"My wife is the partner of my thoughts and feelings" (28th January 1812). "I am a young man, not of age, and have been married for a year to a woman younger than myself. Love seems inclined to stay in the prison" (August 1812). "How is Harriett 'a fine lady?' You indirectly accuse her in your letter of this offence—to me the most unpardonable of all. The ease and simplicity of her habits, the unassuming plainness of her address, the uncalculated connexion of her thought and speech, have ever formed, in my eyes, her greatest charms; and none of these are compatible with fashionable life, or the attempted assumption of its vulgar and noisy *éclat*. You have a prejudice to contend with, in making me a convert to this last

opinion of yours, which, so long as I have a living and daily witness to its futility before me, I fear will be unsurmountable' (to Fanny Godwin, 10th December 1812). "Harriett is very happy as we are, and I am very happy" (27th December 1812). "When I come home to Harriett, I am the happiest of the happy" (7th February 1813). Mrs. Newton writes to Hogg, 21st October 1813: "The lady whose welfare must be so important in your estimation [Harriett] was, as usual, very blooming and very happy during the whole of our residence at Bracknell." The dedication to *Queen Mab* may also be accepted as evidence of affection; though (as I have before remarked) I find nothing to show that Shelley ever had a passion for Harriett—was ever thoroughly "in love" with her. But this satisfactory condition of things was now rapidly changing and vanishing. It appears that some estrangements had occurred between Shelley and his wife towards the end of 1813; she had yielded to the suggestions of interested persons, and importuned him to act in ways repugnant to his feelings and convictions, and conjugal quarrels ensued.* When they returned to London, Shelley had evidently lost the pleasure he previously took in watching Harriett's studies in Latin and otherwise: (she had, by December 1812, been brought on as far as reading many of Horace's Odes). During the spring of 1814 he was much at Bracknell: staying at Mrs. Boinville's house there, without Harriett, from about the middle of February to the middle of March. His letter of the 16th of March to Mr. Hogg shows that by this time his domestic discomforts were grave indeed, at least in his own eyes, and were hurrying towards a crisis. "I have escaped, in the society of all that philosophy and friendship combine, from the dismaying solitude of myself. . . . My heart sickens at the view of that necessity which will quickly divide me from the delightful traquillity of this happy home—for it has become my home. . . . Eliza is still with us—not here but will be with me when the infinite malice of destiny forces me to depart. . . . I have sometimes forgotten that I am not an inmate of this delightful home—that a time will come which will cast me again into the boundless ocean of abhorred society." One reads such

* This is the statement of Mr. Thornton Hunt. The date, "towards the end of 1813," appears in the *Shelley Memorials*. It has been vigorously controverted by Mr. Peacock; but he does not seem to me to have *disproved* it, and one is left to suppose that Lady Shelley speaks from documentary or other solid evidence.

passages, and looks forward to the rapidly approaching result, with a sensation of pain; for he must have a hard heart who, after perusing the accounts of Harriett given by Hogg and Peacock from personal knowledge, has not a kindly sympathy for her, and a reluctance to contemplate her as parted from her husband and her better self.

The first incident that now comes before us looks like the direct reverse of separation. On the 24th of March 1814 Shelley and Harriett were re-married at St George's, Hanover Square, "in order" (as the marriage certificate sets forth) "to obviate all doubts that have arisen, or shall or may arise, touching or concerning the validity" of the previous marriage according to the rites of the Church of Scotland. The fact is that Harriett was again pregnant; and, though there seems to be no real question of any sort as to the binding force of the original marriage, Shelley thought it prudent to make assurance doubly sure for the possible heir to his name and claims. A letter of his dated 21st October 1811 shows that, even at that early date, he was proposing to re-marry in England within a month or so, although in fact the matter dragged on till March 1814. His intention, as expressed in the letter in question, was to settle £700 a year on Harriett in the event of his death.

He first saw Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin soon after this renewed marriage—perhaps towards the middle or close of May.* Mr. Hogg records a brief interview "on the day of Lord Cochrane's trial" (this trial lasted two days, 8th and 9th June); and Mr. Peacock exhibits Shelley as helplessly in love with Mary before he had separated from Harriett. "Nothing that I ever read in tale or history could present a more striking image of a sudden, violent, irresistible, uncontrollable passion." Shelley said on this occasion: "Every one who knows me must know that the partner of my life should be one who can feel poetry and understand philosophy; Harriett is a noble animal, but she can do neither."

Mary, the only daughter of Godwin by his first wife, the celebrated Mary Wollstonecraft, was born on the 30th of August 1797, and was consequently now in her seventeenth year. She

* Mr. Peacock says it must have been between 18th April and 8th June that Shelley first saw Mary, and probably much nearer the later of the two dates than the earlier. If so, and if the *Stanzas, April* 1814 (vol. ii. p. 144) really do, as I fancy, indicate a clear purpose of separation between Shelley and Harriett, Mary cannot have been primarily responsible as the motive cause for that separation.

was rather short, remarkably fair and light-haired, with brownish-grey eyes,* a great forehead, striking features, and a noticeable air of sedateness. Her earliest youth was by no means the period of her best looks—of which probably Mr. Thornton Hunt gives too exalted an idea when he compares her to the antique bust of Clytie. She was a little hot-tempered and peevish in youth, and careless of dress and speech; outspoken and tenacious of her opinions; a faithful friend; with "extraordinary powers of heart as well as head;" truthful and essentially simple, though somewhat anxious to make an impression in company. Shelley, in the last year of his life, said to Trelawny: "She can't bear solitude, nor I society—the quick coupled with the dead." The daughter of Mary Wollstonecraft and of Godwin could not be expected to set any great store by the marriage-tie, considered simply as such, and apart from the question of heartfelt love and voluntary constancy.

It was "in the beginning of the summer of 1814"† that Shelley saw his birthplace for the last time. He walked down from Bracknell to Horsham, at his mother's request, his father and the three youngest children being then absent from Field Place. A very youthful military officer named Kennedy was on a visit there at the time; and, as Bysshe's advent was a secret, the two used to interchange costumes whenever the prodigal son walked out. Captain Kennedy has noted down his impressions of Shelley in a few paragraphs full of good feeling and much to the purpose. Let us appropriate one detail. "I never met a man who so immediately won upon me. The generosity of his disposition and utter unselfishness imposed upon him the necessity of strict self-denial in personal comforts: consequently he was obliged to be most economical in his dress. He one day asked us how we liked his coat, the only one he had brought with him: we said it was very nice, it looked as if new. 'Well,' said he, 'it is an old black coat which I have had done up, and smartened with metal buttons and a velvet collar.'"

* Shelley ought to have known in 1818, when he wrote (see vol. ii. p. 309)

"O Mary dear, that you were here,
With your *brown* eyes bright and clear!"

Yet Mr. Trelawny says "*grey* eyes." A portrait of Mary Shelley by Miss Curran, belonging to this gentleman, shows eyes that might be more fairly called grey than brown, but which have enough of a brownish tinge to account for Shelley's epithet.

† This is the date given by Hogg: Lady Shelley, who reproduces the letter printed by Hogg, says "1813," and may perhaps be right.

X.—THE SEPARATION FROM HARRIETT.

Somewhere about the 17th of June—not later at any rate*—the married life of Shelley with Harriett came to a final close. She returned, with Ianthe, to the care of her father and sister, then living in retirement at Bath. Shelley gave her all the money he possessed,† stating to Mr. Westbrook that he was unable for the time to make her such an allowance as he could wish. He did, however—at once or afterwards—make provision for her by a sum paid quarterly, which has been termed "sufficient."‡

A great deal in this matter depends on the question of precise dates, which the materials at my command do not enable me to determine. It is certain (for I have it on the most unexceptionable authority) that letters from Harriett are or were in existence, written in moving terms, and marked by all the eloquence of truth, proving that Shelley at some time disappeared from her cognizance, without making proper arrangements, or giving any warning or explanation of his intentions. Harriett had, for herself and her child, only fourteen shillings in ready money at the moment. I have some grounds for inferring that these letters date about the end of June. On the other hand, it is no less certain that full forty days elapsed between the separation of Shelley from Harriett, and his departure from London with Mary Godwin; and that Harriett was in personal communication with him fourteen days before the latter event. On or about the 5th of July a letter of her own shows her to have been then at Bath, and to have heard from Shelley about the 1st of the same month. It is also plainly presumable that, if (which, however, I am not very certain of) Mr. Westbrook did at this time really make an annual allowance of £200 to Shelley and his family, that source of income would continue accruing to the profit of Harriett when parted from Shelley; and it is known that her husband wrote to her, soon after leaving for the continent at the end of July, telling her "to take care of

* Mr. Garnett has good grounds for saying this, as he knows that Shelley came to London on 18th June. Mr. Thornton Hunt speaks of the separation as taking place about the 24th of June.

† Middleton, vol. i. p. 268. The statement as to residence at Bath is taken from printed authorities, but I have some reason for doubting it.

‡ I find this stated in the article on Shelley in the *Penny Cyclopædia*. That article was, I believe, written by a distinguished man of letters who had at the time carefully investigated the facts of Shelley's life.

her money"—thus manifestly implying that she had then some money to take care of. After weighing all these counteracting and authentic details as well as I am able, I come to the provisional conclusion that Shelley did at some time and in a certain sense "abandon" Harriett—though, as likely as not, without any intention, even at that moment, of leaving his absence long unexplained; and that at any rate he came to an explanation, and some sort of arrangement on her behalf, before he left England.

Though I cannot regard Shelley as, in any correct sense of the words, irresponsible for his actions, it is right to add here that I am further informed, and again on excellent authority, that about this period his sufferings from spasmodic attacks, and consequent free use of laudanum, were so extreme that he might have committed any wildness of action without surprising those who were in the habit of seeing him. He would carry the laudanum-bottle about in his hand, and gulp from it repeatedly as his pangs assailed him.

The parting from Harriett has been called a separation by mutual consent. Harriett denied to Peacock that there was any consent on her part. There is such a thing as reluctant but unquerulous submission to the inevitable: unless one interchanges that term with the term consent, the materials as yet published do nothing to invalidate Harriett's denial.* Soon afterwards she gave birth to a child, Charles Bysshe, who died in 1826.

Either before or after the final separation—we are not told

* See, in the *Notes*, vol. ii. p. 578, an extract from what Mr. Garnett has very ably said on the subject—with a view to the vindication of Shelley, but by no means to the depreciation of Harriett. His main point is that, at some time between a day of June when Shelley wrote a poem to Mary, and the 28th of July when Shelley and Mary left England together, the poet must have discovered that Harriett was not anxious to continue living as his wife. For my own part, I question whether the poem indicates that Shelley, being in love with Mary, was then endeavouring to control his passion *out of regard to Harriett:* it may not less plausibly be construed as an evidence of the mutual love of Shelley and Mary, kept from the observation of outsiders through motives of prudence alone. If this latter view is adopted, the poem in question does not furnish a suggestion that any indifference of Harriett to Shelley was discovered afterwards, or at all. Distinct testimony to that effect may exist, but has not yet been published. I find, however, a very remarkable statement in Dr. Polidori's Diary (18th June), which I give for what it is worth:—"He [Shelley] married; and, a friend of his liking his wife, he tried all he could to induce her to love him in turn." This Catonian transaction, if true at all, must no doubt be understood in the sense that Shelley, *after* he had discovered the mutual incompatibility between himself and Harriett, found also that the happiness of a friend of his could be promoted by Harriett, and that he then furthered his suit with her. I have good reason to know that, at an earlier period of his wedded life, his disrespect for the marriage-tie was by no means such as to make him tolerant of conduct which he regarded as an interference with its obligations in his own and Harriett's case.—Mr. Forster, in his *Life of Landor*, intimates that he is in possession of documents which throw light upon the entire affair of the separation, but to what particular purport he does not disclose.

which—Shelley avowed to Mary the love which he had, before that event, conceived for her. I will here borrow Lady Shelley's words, the only authentic or precise published record of the fact. "To her, as they met one eventful day in St Pancras churchyard, by her mother's grave, Bysshe, in burning words, poured forth the tale of his wild past—how he had suffered, how he had been misled, and how, if supported by her love, he hoped in future years to enroll his name with the wise and good who had done battle for their fellow-men, and been true through all adverse storms to the cause of humanity. Unhesitatingly she placed her hand in his, and linked her fortune with his own." On the 28th of July they left England. Before his departure with Mary, which had been notified to Harriett, Shelley had ordered a settlement for the benefit of the latter (whether this settlement took full effect is not specified), and he set money apart for her in 1815, as we shall see further on; he corresponded with her during his stay on the continent, and after his return; called upon her immediately after relanding in England; and, at least as late as December 1814, he gave her good advice, and took trouble to advantage her. Mary also continued on amicable terms with Harriett—at any rate no open hostility ensued. I am told that, at some time after the return of Shelley and Mary from the continent in this year 1814, he consulted a legal friend with a view to reintroducing Harriett into his household as a permanent inmate—it is to be presumed, as strictly and solely a friend of the connubial pair, Mary and himself: and it required some little cogency of demonstration on the part of the lawyer to convince the primæval intellect of Shelley that such an arrangement had its weak side.

Some points remain still to be revealed in this whole matter of the separation; but we are probably in a position to estimate already the main facts and their bearings. We shall never do justice to any one of the three parties concerned unless we consider these facts from *their* point of view, and not from that of persons whose opinions are fundamentally different.

Firstly, then, as regards Shelley, it appears to be certain that, after some two years or more of marriage, he found that Harriett did not suit him, partly through the limitations of her own mind and character, and partly through the baneful influence of her sister; that, having already reached this conclusion, he fell desperately in love with Mary Godwin; that this attachment

(whether or not then avowed and confessedly reciprocated), combining with the previous motives, determined him to separate from Harriett; and that the separation, though at one moment a mere piece of abrupt *de facto* work on Shelley's part, was eventually carried out on a deliberate footing, and without decided neglect of her material interests. Shelley was an avowed opponent, on principle, to the formal and coercive tie of marriage: therefore, in ceasing his marital connection with Harriett, and in assuming a similar relation to Mary, he did nothing which he regarded as wrong—though (as far as anything yet published goes) it must distinctly be said that he consulted his own option rather than Harriett's.

Secondly, Harriett took no steps of her own accord to separate from Shelley, and had given no cause whatever for repudiation by breach or tangible neglect of wifely duty; but she did not offer a strenuous pertinacious resistance to the separation, nor exhibit a determined sense of wrong. Mr. Thornton Hunt, indeed, thinks that she may rather have courted the separation at the moment, but only with the idea that it would cause a revulsion in Shelley's mind, inducing him submissively to solicit her return. If Shelley connected himself with Mary, Harriett, after the separation, connected herself with some other protector, and this probably, from the principles she had imbibed, with a conscience equally void of offence—at least at first.

Thirdly, there is no evidence at all that Mary did anything reprehensible with a view to supplanting Harriett, and securing Shelley for herself. When he sought her love, she freely and warmly gave it; and, in so doing, she again acted strictly within the scope of her own code of right.

Such, as far as my authorities go, are the clear facts of this case. They are simple and unambiguous enough; but no doubt liable to be judged with great severity by those who start from contrary premisses. We find three persons fashioning their lives according to their own convictions, and in opposition to the moral rules of their time and country. Two of them act spontaneously, and with a view to their own happiness; the third has her course predetermined by the others, or by one of them, and adapts herself to it with more or less acquiescence. For her it turns out very much amiss; and from her misfortunes or wrongs there will be a Nemesis to haunt the mutual peace of the others.

XI.—FIRST CONTINENTAL TRIP.

The household of Godwin consisted, besides himself, of his second wife, who had previously been married to a Mr. Clairmont; Mary, his daughter by his first wife; Fanny, his daughter by his second wife; and Clare and Charles Clairmont, the children of the second wife by her first marriage. Godwin, eminent as an author—admired for his powerful novel of *Caleb Williams*, and deeply reverenced by a knot of advanced thinkers as the philosopher of *Political Justice* and *The Enquirer*—carried on business as a bookseller in Skinner Street. It is amusing to read of his displeasure if he was not addressed as "Esquire" on a letter-cover, and of Shelley's profound amazement at this displeasure. For some reason Mary was not at this time happy at home. Perhaps the reason was her connexion with Shelley, which was not recognized but much resented by her father and stepmother. Their going abroad together was effected without concealment or hurry on their own account. But Miss Clairmont was minded to accompany them, and this again was strongly objected to by Mrs. Godwin. The consequence is that the three young people started in secret on the 28th July, a singularly sultry day, and crossed from Dover to Calais in a small boat, encountering a perilous squall and thunderstorm.

Miss Clairmont was now of age or nearly so—an Italian-looking brunette, "of great ability, strong feelings, lively temper, and, though not regularly handsome, of brilliant appearance."* She shared Mary's independent opinions on questions such as that of marriage. From this time onwards she became almost a permanent member of Shelley's household, whether abroad or in England.

Having reached Paris (where Shelley pawned his watch, and sent the money, I am informed, to Harriett), the travellers resolved to perform the remainder of their journey on foot, with occasional lifts, and an ass to carry their portmanteau. The ass, however, proved to be "not strong enough for the place," and a mule was substituted when they quitted Charenton. Soon Shelley sprained his ankle; walking became impossible for

* Statements about Miss Clairmont which occur in the sequel are inserted in this memoir for two reasons—because they are a substantial part of Shelley's biography, and because they are already printed in more books than one, so that their suppression here would serve no real purpose of delicate reticence.

him, and an open voiture drawn by another mule replaced the former animal. The route disclosed much horrible devastation perpetrated by the Cossacks and other invaders upon lately re-Bourbonized France. The Alps came into view soon before the tourists reached Neufchâtel: "their immensity" (writes Mrs. Shelley, in her *History of a Six Weeks' Tour*, the authority for all these details) "staggers the imagination, and so far surpasses all conception that it requires an effort of the understanding to believe that they indeed form a part of the earth." A cottage by the Lake of Uri was the desired termination of the tour; but want of money now dictated a return to England, and from Brunen, a village by that lake, the travellers set their faces homewards with all dispatch. They took the *Diligence par Eau* along the Reuss to Loffenberg. "After having landed for refreshment in the middle of the day, we found, on our return to the boat, that our former seats were occupied. We took others; when the original possessors angrily, and almost with violence, insisted upon our leaving them. Their brutal rudeness to us, who did not understand their language, provoked Shelley to knock one of the foremost down. He did not return the blow; but continued his vociferations until the boatmen interfered, and provided us with other seats." Shelley was a man of most eminent physical as well as moral courage; and this small anecdote deserves to be remembered accordingly. From Loffenberg a leaky canoe took the trio on to Mumph: "It was a sight of some dread to see our frail boat winding among the eddies of the rocks, which it was death to touch, and when the slightest inclination on one side would instantly have overset it." No doubt these experiences were utilized in *Alastor*. Returning by Basle, Mayence, and Cologne—finding some Germans "disgusting," and the Rhine a "paradise"—thence to Cleves, posting on to Rotterdam, and expending their last guinea at Marsluys—the travellers landed at Gravesend, after a rough passage, on the 13th of September.

The only literary result of this tour, on the part of Shelley, was the wild unfinished tale of *The Assassins*, which almost looks like a grave burlesque, but was no doubt written in all seriousness. He began it at Brunen, after reading aloud, on a rude pier on the lake, the account of the siege of Jerusalem in Tacitus.

XII.—DOMESTIC LIFE WITH MARY :—ALASTOR.

Soon after his return to London, and at the close of an interval of much pecuniary depression, a great improvement took place in Shelley's worldly position. His grandfather Sir Bysshe died on the 6th of January 1815; his father became Sir Timothy Shelley; Percy was the next heir to the baronetcy and the entailed estate. The result was a new arrangement whereby, in consideration of his giving up some expectations, a clear annual income of £1000 a year from his father was secured to him, and he immediately set aside a portion for Harriett's use.* He had been peculiarly solitary in these last few months. The Godwins ignored him and Mary; some of his friends of the preceding year had fallen away; and Hogg and Peacock were perhaps his only habitual companions.

In the winter which began 1815 he walked a London hospital, in order to acquire some knowledge of surgery which might enable him to be of service to the poor. It has been said, indeed, that he had now a sort of idea of studying medicine professionally; feeling that it might be necessary for him to adopt some definite calling in life, and having more inclination for this than for any other. He had entertained the project as far back as the summer of 1811, prior to his marriage with Harriett, and had even studied medicine then for a short while under a celebrated surgeon. His own health, however, was very delicate in 1815; and in the Spring an eminent physician pronounced him to be in a rapid consumption. This passed away: his lungs suddenly righted in 1818, but the other forms of ill-health from which he suffered remained. A tour along the south coast of Devonshire, and to Clifton, was made in the summer.

He next rented a house at Bishopgate Heath, near Windsor Forest; and passed here several months of comparative health and tranquillity, spending whole days under the oaks of Windsor Great Park. At the end of August, Shelley, with Mary (always named Mrs Shelley), Peacock, and Charles Clairmont, went in a wherry towards the source of the Thames beyond Lechlade in Gloucestershire. The beautiful *Lines in Lechlade Church-*

* Shelley was not at once placed beyond embarrassment in consequence of his grandfather's death. Mr. Locker possesses an unpublished letter from the poet, dated 14th April 1815, saying that he had "the most urgent necessity for the advance of such a sum" as £500. The statement in the text as to Harriett may be relied upon, though not derived from any printed source.

yard were the result. Another possible result, in Mr. Peacock's estimation, may have been the great taste for boating which Shelley ever afterwards retained. This, however, is one of the small points on which much difference of opinion has been expressed. An Eton schoolfellow, Mr. W. S. Halliday (quoted by Hogg), affirms that Shelley never boated at Eton; whereas Medwin says that Shelley not only spoke of boating as having been his greatest delight at Eton, but had also, within the biographer's own knowledge, shown the same taste in still earlier boyhood at the Brentford school, and Mr. Middleton speaks to the same effect as regards Eton, naming Mr. Amos as Shelley's boating companion there. Hogg says nothing about boating by his friend as coming under his own observation at Oxford or afterwards; but relates as symptomatic a prank with washing-tubs played by the poet on a rill at Bracknell. Perhaps we should conclude that Shelley did a good deal of boating in boyhood, but little afterwards until this Lechlade trip revived the fancy. Mr. Peacock thinks that the excessive hobby which Shelley had for floating paper boats may also have been derived from his example: it was not a Shelleyan habit at Oxford. It has been said that on one occasion, having no other paper at hand, he launched a £50 bank-post bill on the pond in Kensington Gardens, and, with greater good luck than he deserved, succeeded in recovering it on the opposite bank. This Hogg denies; but Medwin will have it that such an incident did really occur with a £10 note on the Serpentine. Once, when Shelley was playing with paper boats, he jestingly said that he could wish to be shipwrecked in one of them—he would like death by drowning best. It is curious to note how many times, before the final catastrophe, something occurred to associate the idea of drowning with Shelley—now merely by way of joke, now by some passage in his writings, now by calamities in his family circle, now by premonitory danger to himself. One salient instance is pointed out by Lady Shelley, from an allusion made by the poet to an article in the *Quarterly Review* comparing him to Pharaoh in the Red Sea. "It describes the result of my battle with their Omnipotent God; his pulling me under the sea by the hair of my head, like Pharaoh; my . . . entreating everybody to drown themselves; pretending not to be drowned myself, when I *am* drowned; and lastly *being* drowned."

Alastor, written in 1815 at some time after the Lechlade excursion, was published in the succeeding year in a small volume containing also the bulk of the short pieces classed in our edition as *Early Poems*. In *Alastor* we at last have the genuine, the immortal Shelley. It may indeed be said that the poem, though singularly lovely and full-charged with meaning, has a certain morbid vagueness of tone, a want of firm human body: and this is true enough. Nevertheless, *Alastor* is proportionately worthy of the author of *Prometheus Unbound* and *The Cenci*, the greatest Englishman of his age; which cannot fully be said even of *Queen Mab*, and must be peremptorily denied of any preceding attempts. It may well be supposed that the genial atmosphere of domestic love and intellectual sympathy in which Shelley was now living with Mary contributed to the kindly development of his poetic power.

XIII.—SECOND CONTINENTAL TRIP:—BYRON.

At the beginning of May 1816 Shelley and Mary, with her infant son William, born on the 24th of January, and Miss Clairmont, again went abroad, reaching Paris on the 8th of the month. The practical reason for the trip was probably the obvious one—that they felt inclined for it: but Shelley somehow conceived that there was a more abstruse reason—viz., that his father and uncle (meaning, no doubt, Sir John Shelley-Sidney, not Captain Pilfold) were laying a trap for him with the view of locking him up, and that Mr. Williams, the agent of Mr. Madocks of Tanyrallt, had come down to Bishopgate, and given him warning of this plot, which the poet believed to be only one out of many that his father had schemed for the same purpose. That Shelley made such an allegation is certain from the testimony of Mr. Peacock; and that the allegation was untrue is convincingly represented on the same testimony. How this new delusion got into Shelley's head it is difficult to conceive—the objectlessness of inventing such a tale for Mr. Peacock's sole behoof being patent, not to speak of the lofty veracity of Shelley's character in essentials. We must remember that a poet is "of imagination all compact;" and, as no one had a better right than Shelley to the name of poet, none consequently had a readier store of imaginations which he propounded as realities. But even this was not the last mysterious transaction which beset his departing footsteps. The very night

before his leaving London for the continent, a married lady of fashion, young, handsome, rich, and nobly connected, called upon him, and avowed that the author of *Queen Mab*, hitherto personally unknown to her, was her ideal of everything exalted in man, and that she had come to be the partner of his life. Shelley could do no other than explain that he was already provided in that line; and, with much effusion and magnanimity on both sides, they parted. But the lady followed him to the continent, and many a time watched him, herself unseen, on the Lake of Geneva. The sequel of this story belongs to a later date. Such is the narrative which Shelley, not very long before his death, detailed to Medwin and Byron, and which the former has handed down to us with no lack of embellishing touches. Byron disbelieved the story, attributing all to "an overwrought imagination"; and everybody since seems to have agreed with him—Lady Shelley, for instance, saying that no sort of confirmatory evidence appears in the family papers. Medwin, however, is a believer.

The tourists reached Sécheron, near Geneva, on the 17th of May. On the 25th Lord Byron, with his travelling physician Dr. Polidori, arrived at the same hotel; and the two parties encountered on the 27th, if not before. Byron and Shelley had not previously met: they now found themselves in daily and intimate intercourse. One of the Shelley party, however, Miss Clairmont, was already known to Byron, for she had not long before called upon him as connected with the management of Drury Lane Theatre, and had sought an engagement on the stage, which did not take effect. Byron possibly—indeed, probably—had then admired her: if not then, he did so now. The result was the birth, in the following January, of the daughter known to Byronic biographers as Allegra, or Alba.* Shelley and Mary knew nothing of this fleeting outburst of passion at the time, and were by no means pleased when its results became apparent. But they acted with perfect good feeling, and did everything for Allegra and her mother. For the latter, Byron, from first to last, did nothing; a shameful blot on his honour, unless indeed we surmise that neither Miss Clairmont nor her friends would accede to any proffer on his part.

The feelings of Shelley for Byron were at all periods of a

* For some reason which I do not find explained, Mrs. Shelley applied the name Albè to Byron.

very mixed kind. He admired intensely his poetic genius, and most intensely some of his performances—in especial *Cain* and certain sections of *Don Juan* (both of them works of a later date than 1816). He was totally destitute of uneasy personal vanity as a poet; and, so far from feeling any jealousy of Byron's splendid success both with cultivated judges and with ordinary readers, he very greatly undervalued *himself* in comparison, though on the other hand he was resolved not to be or appear in any way a literary satellite of the great luminary. At the present day we see all these things with very different eyes; and have to reason ourselves into believing that, while the author of *Childe Harold* and *Don Juan* was an intellectual power throughout Europe, and divided the laurel of poetry with Göthe, the author of *Prometheus Unbound* and *Epipsychidion* was almost "nowhere," save only in the laudations of a few partisans,* and in the foul mouths and hypocritical hysterics of quarterly or other orthodox calumniators, heirs to all dearest traditions of scribes and pharisees. *Queen Mab* and *The Cenci* may have been partial exceptions. The former made some stir, in which its audacities of opinion count no doubt for almost everything: *The Cenci* went through two English editions in a short while.† But, as regards the other poems, I presume it is no exaggeration to say that hardly one of them sold, during Shelley's lifetime, to the extent of a hundred copies, in the open market of literature;‡ and perhaps even ten copies would be a bold guess with respect to *Epipsychidion* and *Adonais*. Thus far as regards Shelley's

* Some notices of Shelley in *Blackwood's Magazine* should be excepted, as neither cliqueish nor abusive: see those of *Alastor, Rosalind and Helen*, and *Prometheus*, in the volumes for 1819-20. They show—especially the first—sincere admiration and personal kindliness of feeling, though there is more than enough about Shelley's portentous religious and other opinions. One of them, probably the critique of *Alastor*, was at the time attributed by Shelley to Walter Scott. The review of *Prometheus* is certainly not unmixed praise: we read that "it is quite impossible that there should exist a more pestiferous mixture of blasphemy, sedition, and sensuality." The later review of *Adonais* in *Blackwood* is most outrageous—a tissue of scurrilous sneers and (as regards Keats) of low callousness. The critic finds in the poem "two sentences of pure nonsense out of every three: a more faithful calculation would bring us to ninety-nine out of every hundred."

† I follow other writers in mentioning *The Cenci* as a moderate success. Yet Shelley had no reason to think it such up to 15th February 1821, at any rate, when he wrote to Mr. Peacock (*Fraser's Magazine*, March 1860), "Nothing is more difficult and unwelcome than to write without a confidence of finding readers; and, if my play of *The Cenci* found none or few, I despair of ever producing anything that shall merit them."

‡ "I hope Ollier has told you that Shelley's book sells more and more" is an expression of Leigh Hunt in a letter dated 12th November 1818. This book must be the *Revolt of Islam*, which *may* possibly have failed rather less manifestly than some other volumes: yet Medwin says it "fell almost still-born from the press." He uses a like phrase with regard to *Prometheus Unbound*.

literary relation to Byron. As to his personal relation, he saw much to fascinate him in the poet's company, and was always eagerly susceptible to the finer points of his character; but he bitterly censured his promiscuous and lowering immoralities, and found him, on more grounds and occasions than one, a difficult man to keep friends with. "The canker of aristocracy wants to be cut out" was one of his observations; and perhaps nothing could be said in so small a space going equally close to the substructure of all that was worst in Byron. The reader should turn to *Julian and Maddalo*, to refresh at the fountain-head his recollection of what Shelley thought of his brother poet.

For his part, Byron had a most genuine regard for Shelley, and a sincere relish for his society. He set great store by his critical opinion, and admired his poetry very highly, though perhaps not with much of the insight of sympathy. On one occasion he went so far as to say, "If people only appreciated Shelley, where should *I* be?" Some of his own works, such as *Manfred* and the fourth canto of *Childe Harold*, are understood to owe something to the influence and suggestions of Shelley: others were shown to the latter day by day as written. A few of Byron's remarks upon his friend may here be not inappropriately cited. "You are all mistaken about Shelley. You don't know how mild, how tolerant, how good, he was in society, and as perfect a gentleman as ever crossed a drawing-room, when he liked and where liked."* "He is, to my knowledge, the least selfish and the mildest of men—a man who has made more sacrifices of his fortune and feelings for others than any I ever heard of." "You should have known Shelley to feel how much I must regret him. He was the most gentle, the most amiable and least worldly-minded person I ever met; full of delicacy, disinterested beyond all other men, and possessing a degree of genius joined to simplicity as rare as it is admirable. He had formed to himself a *beau idéal* of all that is fine, high-minded, and noble, and he acted up to this ideal even to the very letter. He had a most brilliant imagination, but a total want of worldly wisdom. I have seen nothing like him, and never shall again, I am certain." Another statement made by Byron, very characteristic of himself, and placing Shelley in a

* So in Moore's *Life of Byron*, vol. ii. p. 622; not "where *he* liked," as I have mostly seen in quotations.

light somewhat different from that in which one is wont to contemplate him, is that he was the only thoroughly companionable man under thirty years of age whom Byron knew. The following also deserves to be borne in mind; though we must assuredly not interpret it so as to infer that there was the slightest taint of insincerity in Shelley's professions of extreme opinions or of personal friendship: Medwin understands it as referring more especially to Leigh Hunt's translations from Homer.* Byron is writing to Murray on the 25th October 1822, and Hunt is the main topic. "Alas, poor Shelley! How he would have laughed had he lived! and how we used to laugh now and then at various things which are grave in the suburbs!" But perhaps the strongest of all evidences of the unique regard in which Lord Byron held Shelley, when we consider his lordship's habit of running down all his acquaintances from time to time, is that which I learn from Mr. Trelawny—that no word of detraction of Shelley ever issued from Byron's lips, within Trelawny's experience or belief. The assertion above quoted that Shelley had "a total want of worldly wisdom" must be understood with some qualification, as implying rather a contempt of self-seeking than any real inaptitude for the ordinary business of life. Byron himself clearly did not undervalue Shelley in this respect, having (besides other proof to the contrary) entrusted to him, along with Mr. Kinnaird, the negotiations for the publishing of the third canto of *Childe Harold*, the *Prisoner of Chillon*, and *Manfred;* while Leigh Hunt states that Shelley had more capacity than himself for business (which is not indeed saying much), and Medwin speaks of him as very sagacious and rational in practical affairs, especially in the interest of his friends. Mr. Thornton Hunt also regards Shelley as having had very great ability to grapple with such affairs, though his own appreciation of his powers in that line was inadequate; and Mr. Trelawny tells me that Shelley could do what few Englishmen can—hold his own perfectly well in personal bargaining with Italian tradesmen. In fact, while he would sacrifice anything for a principle, would fly in the face of all sorts of opinions and conventions, and would incur any amount of personal inconvenience to do a generous act, there is nothing, in Shelley's career as a grown man, to show that he was ill-fitted to cope with the world on its own terms. Not honesty alone,

* Medwin's *Life*, vol. ii. p. 36.

but highmindedness as well, is in one sense the best policy. There were no caprices, no pettinesses, no backslidings, to lower him in the eyes of such people as were capable of rightly estimating him. It is the tone of a hero, not a braggart, that we hear in those memorable words of his to Trelawny—"I always go on until I am stopped, and I never *am* stopped."

After passing a fortnight in the same hotel, the two travelling parties separated; Byron and Polidori moving into the Villa Belle Rive, and Shelley, with Mary and Miss Clairmont, into a small house hard by on the Mont Blanc side of the Lake. Soon afterwards, Byron made a further move, into the Villa Diodati, very beautifully situated on the high banks of the Lake near Coligny, and Shelley into a house at its foot, termed the Maison Chapuis or Campagne Mont Alègre (hence the baptismal name Allegra): he and his would sometimes sleep at Byron's after sitting up talking till dawn. It was a remarkably wet summer; which did not, however, prevent Shelley from being out on the lake at all hours of the day and night. On the 23rd of June, he and Lord Byron, accompanied only by two boatmen and his lordship's servant, undertook a voyage round the Lake, lasting nine days; they visited Meillerie, Clarens, Chillon, Vevai, Lausanne.* On this occasion Shelley read for the first time the *Nouvelle Héloïse:* "an overflowing (as it now seems, surrounded by the scenes which it has so wonderfully peopled) of sublimest genius, and more than human sensibility." He would have liked to weep at the so-called Bosquet de Julie. In sailing near St Gingoux (the scene of a similar incident in the *Nouvelle Héloïse*) the voyagers were overtaken by a tempest, and, through the mismanagement of one of the boatmen, were very nearly upset. Shelley, who somehow could never be taught to swim, considered himself in imminent danger of drowning. He refused assistance, sat on a locker, grasped the rings at both ends, and said he would go down. "I felt in this near prospect of death" (he wrote to Peacock on the 12th of July) "a mixture of sensa-

* A letter from Shelley to Mr. Peacock, dated 17th July 1816, was lately disposed of in the Dillon sale. The auctioneer's catalogue says that it "speaks of private affairs, choice of house in England, intended tour, philosophical remarks, acquaintance with Lord Byron, his character, long and descriptive account of a nine days' journey to Vevai and neighbourhood with Lord B.; Rousseau's *Julie*, Castle of Chillon, &c. 'Lord Byron,' he says 'is an exceedingly interesting person; and, as such, is it not to be regretted that he is a slave to the vilest and most vulgar prejudices, and as mad as the winds?'" This important letter must be the one from which Mr. Middleton gives a long extract, not including the remarkable passage about Byron.

tions, among which terror entered, though but subordinately. My feelings would have been less painful had I been alone: but I knew that my companion would have attempted to save me, and I was overcome with humiliation when I thought that his life might have been risked to preserve mine."

This lake-trip with Byron was succeeded by a land-trip with Mary and Miss Clairmont. On the 20th of July the three started for Chamouni, Mont Blanc, the Source of the Arveiron, and the Glacier of Montanvert; he was nearly lost in a *mauvais pas* on the road to Montanvert. It would be no use to attempt here to give the details: the reader should consult the poem of *Mont Blanc*, composed on this occasion, and the letters which Shelley wrote at the time. I can only make room for a brief reference to the king of mountains. "Pinnacles of snow intolerably bright, part of the chain connected with Mont Blanc, shone through the clouds at intervals on high. I never knew—I never imagined—what mountains were before. The immensity of these aërial summits excited, when they suddenly burst upon the sight, a sentiment of ecstatic wonder not unallied to madness. And remember, this was all one scene: it all pressed home to our regard and our imagination. Though it embraced a vast extent of space, the snowy pyramids which shot into the bright blue sky seemed to overhang our path: the ravine, clothed with gigantic pines, and black with its depth below, so deep that the very roaring of the untameable Arve, which rolled through it, could not be heard above—all was as much our own as if we had been the creators of such impressions, in the minds of others, as now occupied our own. Nature was the poet, whose harmony held our spirits more breathless than that of the divinest." Shelley purchased near Mont Blanc "a large collection of all the seeds of rare Alpine plants, with their names written upon the outside of the papers that contain them. These I mean to colonize in my garden in England" [Mr. Peacock was at this time engaged in looking out a house for Shelley to reside in], "and to permit you [Peacock] to make what choice you please from them."

In the album kept for visitors at the Chartreuse at Montanvert Shelley found that his last predecessor had written some of the platitudes—well-meant platitudes they may be called when they are set down with any distinct meaning at all—about "Nature and Nature's God." The author of

Queen Mab took up the pen, and signed his name with the definition

εἶμι φιλάνθρωπος δημωκράτικός τ' ἄθεός τε.*

Some one added μωρός; and that was possibly the most sensible performance of the three.

Returning to his Genevese villa, Shelley resumed his habitual intercourse with Byron, and also with his old admiration Matthew Gregory Lewis, and had much spectral converse with both of them: he very reasonably controverted the position which they advanced, that no one could consistently believe in ghosts without believing in a God. Lewis, indeed, had already, at some earlier interview, been turning the thoughts of the visitors towards the supernatural; and at his instance the whole party had undertaken to write tales of an unearthly or fantastic character. In the long-run only two stories resulted from this suggestion; the far-renowned *Frankenstein* of Mrs. Shelley, and *The Vampyre* by Dr. Polidori, embodying the nucleus of a tale sketched out by Byron. Rather later, on the 18th of June, occurred an often-repeated incident which is thus authentically jotted down in the physician's diary. "After tea, 12 o'clock, really began to talk ghostly. Lord Byron repeated some verses of Coleridge's *Christabel*, of the witch's breast; when silence ensued, and Shelley, suddenly shrieking, and putting his hands to his head, ran out of the room with a candle. Threw water in his face, and after gave him ether. He was looking at Mrs. Shelley, and suddenly thought of a woman he had heard of who had eyes instead of nipples; which, taking hold of his mind, horrified him." Medwin says† that this story of the pectoral eyes was to have been the subject-matter of the romance to be written by Shelley, along with his wife's *Frankenstein*; which indeed is possible enough, though it *may* only be a confusion of incidents on the biographer's part. In illustration of the vividness of Shelley's feelings in such matters it may be allowable to quote here another instance, though proper to an earlier date, some time in 1815. He was then writing a *Catalogue of the Phœnomena of Dreams, as connecting Sleeping and Waking*, forming part of *Speculations on Metaphysics*; and had come to the mention of an ordinary country-view which he had seen

* The spelling, at which Mr. Swinburne expresses the horror of a Hellenist, is copied *literatim*.

† *Conversations with Byron*, p. 150.

near Oxford, and which singularly corresponded to some dream of his own in past time. Having written up to this point, Shelley finishes with—"Here I was obliged to leave off, overcome by thrilling horror." And Mrs. Shelley adds :—"I remember well his coming to me from writing it, pale and agitated, to seek refuge in conversation from the fearful emotions it excited. No man, as these fragments prove, had such keen sensations as Shelley. His nervous temperament was wound up by the delicacy of his health to an intense degree of sensibility; and, while his active mind pondered for ever upon, and drew conclusions from, his sensations, his reveries increased their vivacity, till they mingled with and made one with thought, and both became absorbing and tumultuous, even to physical pain."

The Shelleys and Miss Clairmont left Geneva on the 29th of August; and returned by Dijon and Hâvre, reaching London about the 7th of September.

XIV.—HARRIETT'S SUICIDE.

While the Shelleys were in Switzerland, Mr. Peacock had settled at Great Marlow in Buckinghamshire: they paid him a visit there in the earlier part of September, and selected a house for themselves in the same town. Pending its being fitted up, the poet stayed at Bath, and there received news that Harriett had on the 10th of November * drowned herself in the Serpentine. Thus, in gloom, abasement, and despair, closed the young life which had been so bright and charming in the bridal days of 1811. The exact course of Harriett's life since June 1814 has never been accurately disclosed; and there is plenty of reason why, even if one had at command (which I have not) details as yet unpublished, one should hesitate to bring them forward. I shall confine myself to reproducing the most definite statement † as yet made on the subject—that of Mr. Thornton Hunt; omitting only one unpleasant expression which I have reason (from two independent and unbiased sources of information) to suppose overcharged. He unreservedly allows, with other biographers, that there was nothing to censure in Harriett's con-

* I find this date in an American edition of Shelley, and some confirmatory particulars elsewhere. Mr. Peacock says "December" without naming any day. He ought to be right, and perhaps is so.

† The "most definite," save a statement, to the same effect as the omitted passage, made by some base calumniator in the *Literary Gazette*, in a review of *Queen Mab*, during Shelley's lifetime—and made in that instance as a charge against Shelley far more than against Harriett.

jugal conduct before the separation; "but subsequently she forfeited her claim to a return, even in the eye of the law. If she left [Shelley],* it would appear that she herself was deserted in turn by a man in a very humble grade of life, and it was in consequence of this desertion that she killed herself." The same author says that, before this event, Mr. Westbrook's faculties had begun to fail; he had treated Harriett with harshness, "and she was driven from the paternal roof. This Shelley did not know at the time." Another writer† affirms that Harriett—poor uncared-for young creature—suffered great privations, and sank to the lowest grade of misery. De Quincey says that she was stung by calumnies incidental to the position of a woman separated from her husband, and was oppressed by the loneliness of her abode—which seems to be rather a vague version of the facts. In any case we will be very little disposed to cast stones at the forlorn woman who sought and found an early cleansing in the waters of death—a final refuge from all pangs of desertion or of self-scorn.

I find nothing to suggest otherwise than that Shelley had lost sight of Harriett for several months preceding her suicide: though it might seem natural to suppose that he continued to keep up some sort of knowledge, if not of how *she* went on, at least of the state of his young children Ianthe and Charles. At all events, be he blameworthy or not in the original matter of the separation, or on the ground of recent obliviousness of Harriett or his children, it is an ascertained fact that her suicide was in no way immediately connected with any act or default of his—but with a train of circumstances for which the responsibility lay with Harriett herself, or had to be divided between her and the antecedent conditions of various kinds. It is moreover a fact clearly attested by Hogg that she had for years had a strange proclivity towards suicide—towards starting the subject, and even scheming the act. I know also, from a MS. letter of Shelley's written very soon after his elopement with Harriett, that, in the complaints of ill-treatment which she had made leading up to that event, a resolution of suicide was not pretermitted.

* I do not see the force of this expression. It is certain that in one sense Harriett did leave Shelley; and equally certain that (to say the very least) her leaving him was *less* of a voluntary act on her part than his leaving her was on his.

† C. R. S., in *Notes and Queries*, 2nd ser., vol. v., p. 373. His statement may perhaps be of no more authority on the point above cited than when he says that Mr. Westbrook died insolvent before Harriett's suicide, and that this took place "in the great basin of the Green Park."

"Early in our acquaintance," says Hogg [*i.e.*, in 1811 or 1812], "the good Harriett asked me 'What do you think of suicide?' She often discoursed of her purpose of killing herself, some day or other, and at great length, in a calm resolute manner. She told me that at school, where she was very unhappy, as she said, (but I could never discover *why* she was so, for she was treated with much kindness, and exceedingly well instructed) she had conceived and contrived sundry attempts and purposes of destroying herself. . . . She got up in the night, she said, sometimes, with a fixed intention of making away with herself. . . . She spoke of self-murder serenely before strangers; and at a dinner party I have heard her describe her feelings, opinions, and intentions, with respect to suicide, with prolix earnestness. . . . The poor girl's monomania of self-destruction (which we long looked upon as a vain fancy, a baseless delusion, an inconsequent hallucination of the mind) amused us occasionally for some years; eventually it proved a sad reality, and drew forth many bitter tears." Again, about the middle of 1813, we find:—"She had not renounced her eternal purpose of suicide; and she still discoursed of some scheme of self-destruction as coolly as another lady would arrange a visit to an exhibition or a theatre." All this requires to be well pondered, as raising a strong presumption that Harriett was a person likely enough to commit suicide, even without being urged thereto by any great degree of unhappiness, or other forcible motive. At the same time, it is true that there may be a deal of talk about self-destruction, with very little intention of it; and Harriett *may* have caught the trick of such talk from Shelley himself—who (as Mr. Hogg says) "frequently discoursed poetically, pathetically, and with fervid melancholy fancies, of suicide; but I do not believe that he ever contemplated seriously and practically the perpetration of the crime."* This last conclusion of Hogg's, however, will be considerably modified in the minds of readers of Trelawny, who find that Shelley wrote on 18th June 1822, asking that devoted friend to procure him, if possible, a small quantity of the strongest prussic acid. "You remember we

* Mr. Furnivall, son of the surgeon at Egham who attended the second Mrs. Shelley in her confinement in 1817, and in whom (as Mr. Peacock reports) the poet had great confidence, tells me an amusing anecdote bearing on this point. The surgeon, after attending a *post mortem* examination, arrived at Shelley's house, and there found Leigh Hunt. The two friends, especially Hunt, were talking rather big about the expediency and attractions of suicide, when Mr. Furnivall proffered his case of surgical instruments for immediate use—but without result.

talked of it the other night, and we both expressed a wish to possess it: my wish was serious, and sprung from the desire of avoiding needless suffering. I need not tell you I have no intention of suicide at present; but I confess it would be a comfort to me to hold in my possession that golden key to the chamber of perpetual rest."

Shelley, on receiving the news of his wife's suicide, hurried up to London; and now began his more special intimacy with Leigh Hunt and his family. All authorities agree in testifying to the painful severity with which the poet felt the shock, and the permanence of the impression. Leigh Hunt says that Shelley never forgot it; it tore him to pieces for a time, and he felt remorse at having brought Harriett, in the first instance, into an atmosphere of thought and life for which her strength of mind had not qualified her. Thornton Hunt speaks in the same strain: "I am well aware that he had suffered severely, and that he continued to be haunted by certain recollections, partly real and partly imaginative, which pursued him like an Orestes." Medwin says that the sorrow ever after threw a cloud over Shelley: indeed he goes so far as to speak of its having brought on temporary derangement—which may probably be true in only a limited sense. Peacock says that "Harriett's untimely fate occasioned him deep agony of mind, which he felt the more because for a long time he kept the feeling to himself." Mr. Trelawny tells me that even at the late period when he knew Shelley—1822—the impression of extreme pain which the end of Harriett had caused to the poet was still vividly present and operative. Mr. Garnett adverts to a series of letters, not yet given to the world, written by Shelley about the middle of December, and therefore under the immediate pressure of his misfortune, which "afford the most unequivocal testimony of the grief and horror occasioned by the tragical incident. Yet self-reproach formed no element of his sorrow, in the midst of which he could proudly say '—— and ——' (mentioning two dry unbiased men of business) 'every one does me full justice, bears testimony to the uprightness and liberality of my conduct to her.'" Mr. Garnett, indeed, concludes that, if Shelley, soon after the suicide of Harriett, appeared calm and unmoved to Peacock (as that writer affirms), this was presumably a symptom of his want of full expansive confidence in Peacock, rather than of his actual self-possession. I think, however, that such

an argument may be pushed too far. The feelings of a strong but variously impressible character like Shelley's under such a conjuncture of circumstances are of a very mixed description: what is called "sentiment" does not cover the whole area. "Sentimentalism" is of course a very different thing from sentiment: but I may here take occasion to quote the noticeable statement of De Quincey, in allusion to a description he had heard of Shelley's personal appearance:—"This gave to the chance observer an impression that he was tainted, even in his external deportment, by some excess of sickly sentimentalism; from which I believe that in all stages of his life he was remarkably free." For my part I can imagine that he was not only, in a certain way, calm enough at times immediately after Harriett's death, whether to the eyes of Peacock or of other friends, but even that he could (as I am assured * he did some few months later) apply to her the emphatic term "a frantic idiot." He must no doubt have regarded her later career as one marked by great want of self-respect, and may have both felt and expressed himself strongly now and again, without derogating from the substantial rectitude and tenderness of his nature—qualities disputable only by creatures of the type of those Quarterly Reviewers who, at the same time that they represented Shelley's life as a compound of "low pride, cold selfishness, and unmanly cruelty," discerned also that "the predominating characteristic of his poetry was its frequent and total want of meaning," and that the *Prometheus* was "in sober sadness drivelling prose run mad," and "looked upon the question of Mr. Shelley's poetical merits as at an end." † And so indeed it was after the spawning of that opprobrium of the British and modern Muse, the *Prometheus Unbound*. "These be thy gods, O Israel!"

* By Mr. Furnivall, who heard it repeatedly from his father.

† These expressions are accurately quoted from the *Quarterly Review* of April 1819 and October 1821; critiques of *Laon and Cythna*, the *Revolt of Islam*, and *Rosalind and Helen*, in the former article, and of *Prometheus Unbound* in the latter. Even these phrases fall short of what we find in the *Literary Gazette* of 1820, critiques of *The Cenci* and *Prometheus*. *The Cenci*, we are told, is the most abominable work of the time, and seems to be the production of some fiend: the reviewer hopes never again to see a book "so stamped with pollution, impiousness, and infamy." *Prometheus* is "little else but absolute raving: and, were we not assured to the contrary, we should take it for granted that the author was lunatic, as his principles are ludicrously wicked, and his poetry a *mélange* of nonsense, cockneyism, poverty, and pedantry." Further on we find the critic speak of "the stupid trash of this delirious dreamer," and "this tissue of insufferable buffoonery."

XV.—MARRIAGE AND MARRIED LIFE WITH MARY.

On the 30th of December 1816 Shelley married his dearly-loved Mary. It has been said that Byron persuaded him to take this step; that Godwin made it an express condition of his continuing further intercourse with Shelley: and again that one reason which influenced the latter was that he thought he should thus be more secure of getting and retaining the custody of his children by his former marriage. The first statement does not seem very likely: the third, if true, would indicate that litigation for the custody of the children was already begun or clearly in prospect, as otherwise it can hardly be supposed that the idea of so exceptional a legal process would have occurred to the father. The second reason assigned, which concerns Godwin, may probably be true, as far as it goes; though he and Shelley had not all this while remained wholly estranged—some communication between them having recommenced as early at least as November 1815. But we shall probably come much nearer to the truth if we infer that Shelley and Mary, while perfectly at one in regarding mutual love, and not any religious or social formality, as the truly sacred and valid marital tie, recognized also that it was for the practical advantage of themselves and their offspring to place their affection under the same sanction as that of other people; and, if so, the supposition of any extraneous pressure upon them becomes a futility.

They soon afterwards entered upon their residence at Marlow, Miss Clairmont and her brother Charles, with the infant Allegra, being along with them. Mr Peacock was close by, and they saw something also of their next neighbour Mr Maddocks (not the landlord and friend of the Tanyrallt days): of other mere neighbours they knew little or nothing. "I am not wretch enough to tolerate an acquaintance," was Shelley's phrase. The house was a large one, situated away from the river, with extensive gardens and numerous rooms, well furnished by Shelley, and taken on a lease for twenty-one years. It is still standing, but partly converted into a beershop. Shelley lived here like a country gentleman on a small scale, and probably (considering the lavish generosity he was continually exercising in other ways) beyond his means, though he was not either wasteful or unreckoning: friends were continually with him, and he almost kept open house. There were three servants, if not a fourth

assistant; including a Swiss nursemaid for the infant William, named Elise. Shelley kept a well-sized boat for either sailing or rowing, but no horse or carriage. The boat had been named by him the *Vaga*, and so lettered: some humourist added the final syllable *bond*. It is said that he would frequently go to the woods of Bisham at midnight, and repeat his old process of conjuring the devil—who never came: but it seems more probable that he laughed bores to scorn by *saying* he had done this in his nocturnal rambles than that he really did it. His daily routine of life at Marlow has been thus sketched by Leigh Hunt in a passage frequently quoted. "He rose early in the morning; walked and read before breakfast; took that meal sparingly; wrote and studied the greater part of the morning; walked and read again; dined on vegetables (for he took neither meat nor wine); conversed with his friends, to whom his house was ever open; again walked out; and usually finished with reading to his wife till ten o'clock, when he went to bed. This was his daily existence. His book was generally Plato or Homer, or one of the Greek tragedians, or the Bible, in which last he took a great (though peculiar) and often admiring interest."* Shelley's charity at Marlow (as it had before been at Tanyrallt) was exemplary. He had a list of weekly pensioners, and exerted himself in all sorts of ways, equally with purse and person, to relieve the distress of the lacemakers and others in his neighbourhood. In attending some of the poor in their cottages, reckless of infection, he caught a bad attack of ophthalmia. This not only troubled him at the time; but he had a relapse of the malady at the end of the same year, 1817, severe enough to prevent his reading, and again as late as January 1821.

About March 1817, at Hunt's house in Hampstead, Shelley met Keats, and also the brothers James and Horatio Smith, wealthy city men, and authors of the *Rejected Addresses* and various other witty writings. He became intimate with Horatio, whom he esteemed very highly, and who, when Shelley was at a later date in Italy, transacted many money-matters for him, whether of business or liberality. "Keats did not take to Shelley as kindly as Shelley did to him: being a little too sensitive

* Mr. Trelawny tells me that such was Shelley's interest in the Bible—the *Old* Testament in especial—that he said on one occasion that, if he could save only one book from a general catastrophe of letters, he would select the Bible. What he particularly valued was its historic and poetic antiquity.

on the score of his origin, he felt inclined to see in every man of birth a sort of natural enemy;"* and, in his after period of failing health, a certain irritable suspiciousness took possession of him. It seems clear too that he set a very mediocre value upon Shelley's poetic performances; indeed, he regarded him apparently as a mere effervescent tiro, to whom a word or two of good advice, but hardly of encouragement, would be appropriate. On his receiving a copy of *The Cenci*, the only remark he made, having the character of direct criticism, in his letter of acknowledgment, was—"You, I am sure, will forgive me for sincerely remarking that you might curb your magnanimity, and be more of an artist, and load every rift of your subject with ore." And then further on: "I am in expectation of *Prometheus* every day. Could I have but my own wish effected, you would have it still in manuscript, or be but now putting an end to the second act."† These phrases may have been strictly sincere, and therefore so far proper for Keats to write: but they were certainly grudging, from the still younger author of so imperfect a production (however glorious in poetic potentialities) as *Endymion* to the author of such a masterpiece of all sorts of power as *The Cenci:* even *Alastor* must, in point of maturity, be placed a good deal ahead of *Endymion*. When we weigh all the habitual jealousies between rival poets, along with the something very like patronizing depreciation vouchsafed by Keats, we shall watch with a warmer glow of sympathy the flood of shining generosity and impetuous loving admiration which the celestial soul of Shelley poured through *Adonais*. His detailed critical opinion of Keats will be more appositely introduced when we come to speak of that poem.

XVI.—THE CHANCERY SUIT.

Meanwhile a Chancery suit had been commenced to determine whether Mr. Percy Bysshe Shelley or Mr. Westbrook was the more proper person to elicit such intellectual and moral faculties as the ruling power of the universe might have gifted the poet's first two children with. In the eyes of a bandaged Justice the retired hotel-keeper proved to be clearly better fitted for this function than the author *in esse* of *Alastor*, and *in posse* of the *Triumph of Life*.

Mr. Westbrook refused to give up, at Shelley's request, the

* Leigh Hunt's *Autobiography*, pp. 266-7.

† *Shelley Memorials*, p. 143.

two children to his keeping—and every considerate person will respect the motives and feelings of the father of the unfortunate Harriett in this matter; and in their name he filed a petition in Chancery, alleging that Shelley had deserted his wife, was in opinion an atheist, and intended to bring up the children in accordance with his own views. *Queen Mab* was cited in proof of the author's condemnable speculations concerning religion and the relation of the sexes. The petition also stated that Mr. Westbrook had lately invested £2000 four per cents in the names of trustees, to be handed over eventually to the children, and the dividends applied meantime to their maintenance and education. Shelley's legal adviser in this suit was Mr. Longdill; and Brougham is stated to have been employed as counsel —on which side I do not find recorded. It would appear that Shelley drew up his own replication to the petition, for he speaks of "my Chancery-paper," as "a cold, forced, unimpassioned, insignificant piece of cramped and cautious argument."*

The judgment of Lord Chancellor Eldon was delivered on or about the 23d of August.† The most essential passages run as follows:—"I have carefully looked through the answer of the defendant, to see whether it affects the representation, made in the affidavits filed in support of the petition, and in the exhibits referred to, of the principles and conduct in life of the father in this case. I do not perceive that the answer does affect the representation, and no affidavits are filed against the petition. . . . There is nothing in evidence before me sufficient to authorize me in thinking that this gentleman has changed, before he has arrived at twenty-five, the principles he avowed at nineteen; and I think there is ample evidence, in the papers and in conduct, that no such change has taken place. . . . This is a case in which, as the matter appears to me, the father's principles cannot be misunderstood; in which his conduct, which I cannot but consider as highly immoral, has been established in proof, and established as the effect of those principles—conduct nevertheless which he represents to himself and to others, not as conduct to be considered as immoral, but to be recommended and observed in practice, and as worthy of approbation. I con-

*See p. 254.

† According to Medwin, 17th March; and this date reappears in other publications. But a letter from Mr. Longdill, dated 5th August 1817, cited in the *Shelley Memorials*, p. 75, proves the earlier date to be incorrect.

sider this, therefore, as a case in which the father has demonstrated that he must and does deem it to be a matter of duty which his principles impose on him to recommend, to those whose opinions and habits he may take upon himself to form, that conduct, in some of the most important relations of life, as moral and virtuous, which the law calls upon me to consider as immoral and vicious—conduct which the law animadverts upon as inconsistent with the duties of persons in such relations of life, and which it considers as injuriously affecting both the interests of such persons and those of the community. I cannot, therefore, think that I shall be justified in delivering over these children, for their education, exclusively to what is called the 'care' to which Mr. Shelley wishes it to be entrusted."* It is stated that the poet had intended to place the children with a lady thoroughly qualified for such a post, Mrs. Longdill. The order of the Court of Chancery proceeded to restrain the father or his agents from taking possession of the infants, or intermeddling with them till further orders. The case could have been carried by appeal into the House of Lords; but probably Shelley felt that he should obtain no redress there, and he dropped further proceedings. He did not, however, lose sight of practical contingencies which might affect the case; for we find him, as late as 26th January 1819, and all the way from Naples, writing to Mr. Peacock: "We have reports here of a change in the English ministry. To what does it amount? for, besides my national interest in it, I am on the watch to vindicate my most sacred rights, invaded by the Chancery Court."

The result was that the children were handed over to the guardianship of Mr. and Miss Westbrook, and more immediately to that of a clergyman of the Church of England, Dr. Hume.† Shelley, who never saw them again, had to set apart, out of his income of £1000 a year, £200 for the children, which

* The judgment of Lord Eldon, it will be observed, says nothing of "desertion" of Harriett by Shelley. It has been stated to me that his lordship said during the proceedings something to the effect that "Shelley had left the children to starve, and the grandfather had taken them up, and had a right to keep them." But, as the written judgment is silent on this point, I should presume that Lord Eldon either spoke loosely or was reported unprecisely.

† I find this name in a letter from Horatio Smith, dated 13th April 1821, given in the *Shelley Memorials*, p. 168. From the same book, p. 75, it appears that a Mr. Kendall was recommended as a guardian during the suit: whether he actually obtained the appointment in the first instance I cannot say.

sum was regularly deducted by Sir Timothy.* At one time, in 1821, some complication ensued; and Shelley, then in Italy, found himself suddenly without a penny of incomings. The matter, however, was pretty soon set right through the intervention of Horatio Smith, and apparently without Sir Timothy's having been privy to the harsh and unneeded stoppage.

Of all the blows brought down upon Shelley by his conscientious adherence, in word and deed, to sincere convictions, this appears to have been the one which he felt most profoundly. He was at this time almost domesticated with the family of Leigh Hunt, then residing at Lisson Grove; and that affectionate and warmly loved and trusted friend attests that the bereaved father could never afterwards venture so much as to mention the children to him. He had some fears moreover that the son of his second marriage, William, would also be taken away, and he contemplated leaving England in consequence; but nothing came of this. His indignation winged more than one quivering shaft of verse against Lord Eldon. About the same time he was made answerable for some of Harriett's liabilities, incurred without any knowledge on his part, and was in some danger of arrest: but this also passed over.

Mary meanwhile continued to reside at Marlow. Here her second child, Clara, was born on the 3d of September. Shelley was with her at the time; and would walk, or perhaps row, down to Egham, a distance of about sixteen miles, to see the surgeon Mr. Furnivall, and, on arriving, would take no refreshment beyond a bowl of milk. His exceeding good-nature impressed this gentleman; who considered indeed that Mary was somewhat too free and exacting in ordering her husband about, which he submitted to with the docility of a child. One is more inclined to smile over Shelley's *étourderie* than to attribute to him anything wilfully amiss when one learns that the larger part of the obstetrical bill remained unpaid at the time of the family's departure from Marlow to Italy, and for ever afterwards.†

The fewest words should here be hazarded or wasted regarding the rights or wrongs of the Lord Chancellor's decision. I understand that its legal validity has never been overruled, but that probably it would not now be allowed to count as a pre-

* These are the sums named in the *Shelley Memorials*, p. 75. Yet it would seem afterwards, p. 168, that the sum for Shelley's own use was £880, and for the children only £120 per annum.

† I am indebted to Mr. Furnivall's son for these minor but characteristic details.

cedent. Previous writers have, with befitting fairness, pointed out that it proceeds on the grounds not solely nor strictly of speculative opinion, but of conduct framed according to opinion unrecanted. Without over-refining upon this point, we may say that logical minds which accept "saving faith" as a principle are entitled, in the ratio of their logicality, to accept Lord Eldon's judgment as righteous; logical minds which affirm this to be unrighteous will, in the like ratio, demur to the theory of saving faith. It is a very spacious arena for discussion; and he who denounces the judgment or the judge in this English "Mortara case" without going several steps farther is presumably at least as much of a partisan as of a reasoner.

XVII.—THE REVOLT OF ISLAM.

His reverses did not depress Shelley, but nerved him to greater exertions. While the Lord Chancellor was about to brand him as less fit for the most rudimentary duties of social life than any other man in England, he was preparing to prove himself one of the few men then living in the world predestined to immortality. *Laon and Cythna*, now known as *The Revolt of Islam*, was written in the summer and early autumn of 1817. It was composed chiefly as the poet was seated on a high promontory of Bisham Wood. The principal particulars regarding the genesis of the poem are to be found in its preface, dedication, and notes; to these therefore I refer the reader.

Some copies of *Laon and Cythna* were ready for delivery by Christmas 1817; but, after a very few had been issued—(it is generally said, only three, but one finds reason to believe there were rather more than this)—the publisher, Mr. Ollier, became alarmed at the audacities of the poem, especially its main incident of conjugal love between a brother and sister; and, under strong pressure from him, Shelley reluctantly consented to make some modifications. It has been said that he was at last "convinced of the propriety"* of so doing: at any rate, he did it. The changes are not numerous, affecting only fifty-five lines besides the title-page and some passages in the preface. Captain Medwin—so he informs us—was told by Shelley that this poem, and the *Endymion* of Keats, were written in friendly rivalry; and that the compact was to produce both works within six months, which Shelley at all events very nearly managed.

* *Shelley Memorials*, p. 83.

It was a great effort, and a near approach to a great poem; clearly, in more senses than one, greater than *Alastor*, though its vast scale and unmeasured ambition place it still more obviously in the category of imperfect achievements. Gorgeous ideality, humanitarian enthusiasm, and a passionate rush of invention, more especially of the horrible, go hand in hand in the *Revolt of Islam*. It affects the mind something like an enchanted palace of the *Arabian Nights*. One is wonderstruck both at the total creation, and at every shifting aspect of it; but one does not expect to find in it any detail of the absolute artistic perfection of a Greek gem, nor any inmate of consummate interest to the heart. Its flashing and sounding chambers are full of everything save what one most loves at last, repose and companionship.

With these few wretchedly inadequate—not to say presumptuous—remarks, I must leave the *Revolt of Islam;* only further observing that, whatever its imperfections of plan and execution, it is not only a marvellous well-head of poetry, but a remarkably original work: it was greatly unlike any poem that had preceded (so far as I know), and even the demon of imitation has left it solitary.

XVIII.—SHELLEY QUITS ENGLAND FOR ITALY:—ROSALIND AND HELEN.

Another pulmonary attack towards the end of the autumn of 1817 made Shelley think gravely of what it would behove him to do; and he eventually resolved to go to Italy (he and Hogg had studied the Italian language in 1813) with no definite idea of when he would find it practicable to return. He never did return: the archangelic feet and brain and heart which quitted England in the Spring of 1818, were never again to be repelled by that grudging and unwitting stepmother.

Health was the motive put forward by Shelley for his departure; but in all probability the state of his finances also had something to do with it, and more especially the involvements which he was perpetually incurring through his unbounded munificence to others. It is a remark of Mr. Thornton Hunt, and I have no doubt a true and suggestive one, that a fixed characteristic of Shelley was this—that, if he had one sufficient motive for any course of action, he would specify that, and ignore all minor motives; and that he was thus, without any

real cause, sometimes regarded as uncandid or reserved. This would explain how he may, with entire personal truth and self-consistency, have simply alleged health as his reason for leaving England; although, had the motive of health been absent, that of purse would have sufficed.

To give some idea of Shelley in one of the most prominent of his personal traits, I will here cite, regardless of the sequence of date, a few out of the many acts of generosity recorded of him. Some others have been mentioned already, and how many more remain unrecorded! The reader will bear in mind that the income of Shelley and his family was, from 1812 to 1814, something probably like £300 a year; from 1815 to the middle of 1817, £1000; and from the latter date onwards, after the deduction made under the order in Chancery, about £800.

"He was able, by restricting himself to a diet more simple than the fare of the most austere anchorite, and by refusing himself horses, and the other gratifications that appear properly to belong to his station (and of which he was in truth very fond), to bestow upon men of letters, whose merits were of too high an order to be rightly estimated by their own generation, donations large indeed if we consider from how narrow a source they flowed."* He was besides most delicate in the manner of conferring such obligations. He repeatedly gave away all his money before reaching a coach-office, and was consequently obliged to walk to town; and he once entered the grounds of his close neighbour at Marlow, Mr. Maddocks, without shoes, having bestowed his on a poor woman. Almost immediately after his expulsion from Oxford, he offered through his father's solicitor to accept, in lieu of his claim to the entailed estate of £6000 per annum (perhaps he had not then a clear idea of the amount), an annuity of £200, leaving all the residue for his sisters—an act of almost unjustifiably self-oblivious good-nature. He proposed at one time to raise money on a *post obit*, to settle it on a lady whom Medwin was desirous of marrying; but this his cousin, with all right feeling, declined. During his stay at Marlow, having written a pamphlet named *A Proposal for putting Reform to the Vote throughout the Country*,† he prof-

* Hogg, vol. i., p. 245. I suppose the case more particularly, though not alone, here referred to, is that of Mr. Peacock, already mentioned in our pages.

† This is the title generally given—I have not myself seen the pamphlet. Lowndes registers it by the singular title—"We pity the Plumage, but forget the Dying Bird. An Address to the People on the Death of the Princess Charlotte. By the Hermit of Marlow. [No imprint—1817. 8vo, pp. 16. Privately printed.]"

fered £100, a full tenth of his income for a year, to further the project. In the last four or five years of his life he frequently assisted Leigh Hunt; and in one instance (perhaps towards the end of 1818)* presented him with £1400, which he had raised by an effort with a view to relieving his friend from debt. In Dr. Polidori's diary I find it stated that Shelley paid Godwin's debts somewhere about the time of his falling in love with Mary. The following singular jotting also occurs: "When starving, a friend to whom he had given £2000, though he knew it, would not come near him." That Shelley was ever "starving" is no doubt not true, though it is highly consistent with probability that he sometimes could not count upon daily money to meet daily necessities; the "£2000" may be mythical in a like *degree* with the starvation, rather than absolutely so. His personal disinterestedness, apart from liberality to others, was equally marked. Leigh Hunt says, "He had only to become a yea and nay man in the House of Commons, to be one of the richest men in Sussex. He declined it, and lived upon a comparative pittance. Even the fortune that he would ultimately have inherited, as secured to his person, was petty in the comparison." I presume that there is substantial truth in this; save that the incident referred to is probably the same which I have already traced elsewhere with a different colouring—the offer of a large fortune on condition that he would entail it on his eldest son. Upon Percy's refusal, the money, it is stated, went to his brother John.† Medwin says also that he refused, at a time of pecuniary straits, an offer of £3000 from Sir John Shelley-Sidney to resign his contingent interest in the Penshurst estate. This is given as an instance of the romantic value he attached to his merely adventitious connexion with the descent from Sir Philip Sydney, and may be a figment.

I have mentioned above a pamphlet on the subject of Parlia-

* I found this surmise on an expression in a letter from Hunt, 9th March 1819, "You know the difficulties which I foolishly suffered to remain upon me when Shelley did that noble action." (*Hunt's Correspondence*, vol. i., p. 126). Medwin, however, puts the affair later, at the time when Hunt was about leaving England, or towards the autumn of 1821. He also introduces into this matter "Horace Smith, who not only advanced the passage-money, but a very considerable sum for the payment of his debts—as much, I think Shelley told me, as £1400." (*Life of Shelley*, vol. ii. p. 137). Of course we are to understand that, though Smith *advanced* the money, the *donor* of it was still Shelley.

† *Biographie des Contemporains*, 1834. There are many incorrectnesses in this article about Shelley, and in others in French books: I should therefore regard the statement in the text as merely a rumour requiring verification, were it not that indisputable MS. authority exists for the facts as narrated by me on p. lviii.

mentary Reform. This was published soon after the death of the Princess Charlotte (November 1817), and took immediate occasion from that event. Shelley (as we have seen) did not give his name on the title-page, but figured as "The Hermit of Marlow." The whirligig of time has brought in many revenges to Shelley; and this among others—that the Tories found it their interest and necessity to pass in 1867 almost the very scheme of Reform which the poet and "dreamer," the atheist and democrat, had suggested in 1817; for it makes little difference whether we speak of a payment of money in "direct taxes" or in "rating." "He disavowed any wish to establish universal suffrage at once, or to do away with monarchy and aristocracy, while so large a proportion of the people remained disqualified by ignorance for sharing in the government of the country, though he looked forward to a time when the world 'would be enabled to 'disregard the symbols of its childhood;' and he suggested that the qualification for the suffrage should be *the registry of the voter's name as one who paid a certain small sum in direct taxes.*"*

After staying in London towards the beginning of 1818 to settle some business, Shelley, with his wife and two children, and Miss Clairmont and her baby, left for Italy on the 11th of March, and proceeded straight to Milan: hence Allegra was sent on to her father at Venice. They spent about a month in Milan, visiting thence the Lake of Como, where they thought of passing the summer; but this proved unfeasible, and early in May they went on to Pisa.† Here, on this first visit, they found little satisfaction, and shifted after three or four days to Leghorn; where, in the Via Grande, they stayed till the 5th of June, and made acquaintance with Mr. and Mrs. Gisborne. This lady had been intimate with Mary Wollstonecraft, and was a friend of Godwin's. She was highly amiable and accomplished, and "completely unprejudiced;" and Shelley, though he spoke of her in one instance as "the antipodes of enthusiasm," found much pleasure and satisfaction in her society both now and afterwards. Mr. Gisborne also was a man of extensive scholarship, and of liberal opinions, which the poet supposed to be the reflex of those of his wife. Shelley thought him dull—an

* *Shelley Memorials*, pp. 87-8.

† Many interesting details as to the sojourn and localities in Italy will be found in Mrs. Shelley's notes in these volumes: I therefore touch upon them the more lightly.

opinion from which Mr. Peacock afterwards saw reason to differ, and which does not seem to have affected the pleasantness of Shelley's own intercourse with him.

From Leghorn the Shelleys and Miss Clairmont went to the Bagni di Lucca. Here he finished *Rosalind and Helen*, a poem which he had begun at Marlow, and laid aside, setting on it only a mediocre value. His wife now prevailed upon him to complete it. Shelley has evidently put a good deal of *himself* into this poem—the character and broken health of Lionel, his connexion with Helen, and the legal complication whereby Rosalind is bereaved of her children; and, if we were to assess the merits of a poem by the number of beautiful lines and exquisite images it comprises, we should have to accord a very honourable place to *Rosalind and Helen*. On the whole, however, it may be pronounced a comparative failure, being a somewhat *washy* performance. We read it because it is Shelley's, and are repaid for the enterprise by its lovely and thick-coming fancies: but, under other circumstances, we should not read it, nor consider its individual charms a sufficient inducement. Shelley published the poem in 1819, but still cared little about it. In July, feeling for the nonce incapable of original composition, he took up the *Symposium* of Plato, and made in ten mornings' work his beautiful but abridged and not rigidly correct version of it. He also began, but never finished, a prefatory essay to the *Symposium, On the Literature, the Arts, and the Manners, of the Athenians*, intended to exhibit the diversities between antique and modern life and modes of thought.

XIX.—JULIAN AND MADDALO.

On the 17th of August 1818 Shelley and Miss Clairmont went to Venice, where Byron was staying. Mrs. Shelley wrote that they had started "on important business," and one may surmise that this had something to do with Allegra. They arrived at midnight of the 22nd, in a storm of wind, rain, and lightning. Shelley saw Byron on the ensuing day: they rode along the Lido, and repeated this exercise almost every evening. Byron offered Shelley and his family the use of his villa, I Capuccini, near Este, not far off; and they spent a few weeks here, varied by visits to Venice itself. They quitted Este on the 7th of November, going southwards.

During the stay here, Shelley for the first time lost one of his

children by death, the youngest of the four. Little Clara, who bore a resemblance to her father, suffered from heat and teething: the parents hurried from Este to Venice for advice—so hastily that they had forgotten to bring their passports, and so impetuously that they made way nevertheless; but to no purpose—Clara died on reaching the city.

The visit to Venice produced one imperishable result—the poem of *Julian and Maddalo*, which was written, wholly or chiefly, in the villa at Este. Beautiful as is *Alastor*, and splendid the *Revolt of Islam*—impossible as it would have been for any but a very great poet in his early prime to produce either of these works—it cannot be said that the one or other is, on its own sole showing, the sufficient basis for such a renown as that of Shelley now is, and will be till the extinction of the English language. Each of them is an *expanding* of power—each a progression towards a goal: each would be a divine suggestion had no perfect development ensued afterwards, but still a suggestion, and not absolutely a monument. Time, to whom the ruin of an empire is child's-play, and who had lately had his will with that of a Napoleon, might have addressed himself to the rather tougher task of extinguishing the *Revolt of Islam*, and might possibly have succeeded, had that poem not been followed up by others greater, and in especial more ripe and rounded, than itself. But *Julian and Maddalo* was the abolition of the anarch's power over Shelley: as he set the finishing hand to that work, he ceased to be a subject of Time, and became a citizen of Eternity.

I shall not here attempt any analysis of the beauties of *Julian and Maddalo*, and still less any discussion of such blemishes as criticism can detect in it. But I must point to its position amid the astonishing series of masterpieces which its still very youthful author (twenty-six years of age) now found himself inspired to produce. Along with *Prometheus Unbound* and *The Cenci*, *Julian and Maddalo* appears to me to complete the supreme trine of Shelley's genius.* *Prometheus* (with which one might associate the *Witch of Atlas*, as hardly if at all less perfect,

* *I. e.*, confining the question to works of considerable length. If I might venture to express an opinion on the point, I should say that the very finest piece of work—creation and fashioning combined—which he ever produced is the *Ode to the West Wind* (vol. ii. p. 207): but that is short. The *Stanzas written in Dejection near Naples*, *Ode to Liberty*, *Hymn of Apollo*, *Skylark*, and *Lines written on hearing the News of the Death of Napoleon*, are brothers *very* near the throne—not to speak of others.

and, had it been completed, no doubt the *Triumph of Life*) represents ideality; *The Cenci*, tragedy; *Julian and Maddalo*, a poet's perception of the familiar. The *Letter to Maria Gisborne* illustrates that same faculty, under more simple conditions: no other poem of Shelley's can be cited in this connexion. It would be a great mistake to regard *Julian and Maddalo* as simply a familiar poem, such as, from differing points of view, are many of Wordsworth's or (in our own days) the *Dora* of Tennyson: neither is it an express idealization of the familiar. Were it intended as either of these, it must be called a patchy piece of execution. It is rather (as I have endeavoured above to express the thing) a poet's perception of the familiar: and the deepest property of it is the perfect limpidity of mind and word—I take no count here of mere difficulties of diction—whereby the poet makes the thing perceptible from his own poetic point of view to others also who are not poets. There is no apparent *theory* of how to produce such a result, but a concrete production of it. I am not sure that the same thing had ever been exactly attempted before, or has been thoroughly attained since, at least in English. One cannot cite any writing of Shakspeare as a precedent; for, though he is of course quite as familiar and quite as poetic in motive, and even more so in numerous details, there are in him other prominent elements of perception—as the romantic and humorous—which take the result into a different class. The same, *mutatis mutandis*, may be said of Byron's *Don Juan*—which was begun just about the same time that *Julian and Maddalo* was written, but Shelley, I believe, heard nothing of it then.

The fact is that the range and variety of Shelley's powers have been very much undervalued, and even mis-stated. You talk of Shelley to an ordinary poetic reader, and find that the only common ground of criticism regarding him is his ideality—his flights of speculation, imagination, and imagery, which are regarded (and justly in many particular instances) as merging into the fanciful and dreamlike. You cite *The Cenci:* it is then unhesitatingly admitted that Shelley demonstrated a tragic power of the first class in recent centuries, but even this does not sink deep into your interlocutor's convictions. In sober truth, Shelley showed his mastery in six several and very diverse lines of poetic faculty; and was in some of them unprecedented or unparagoned, and in none other than original. I have al-

ready specified three phases of his poetry—1, the ideal (*Prometheus*, *Witch of Atlas*, *Triumph of Life*, *Epipsychidion*, *Adonais*, and others); 2, the tragic (*The Cenci*); 3, the poetic-familiar (*Julian and Maddalo*). To these must be added—4, the lyric (choruses of *Prometheus* and *Hellas*, and a multitude of minor poems); 5, the grotesque (*Peter Bell the Third*, and, as a less perfect but still very noticeable example, *Swellfoot the Tyrant*); 6, poetic translation, in which, for uniform and exalted success in varying lines of work, I presume him to be unrivalled among Englishmen—and this may be said without advancing the untenable proposition that he is always absolutely side by side with his original in either spirit or detail. Shelley was decidedly adverse to the general run and mode of translations from the poets; and no wonder he was so, when we consider his own thrilling susceptibility to poetry, and capacity for rendering it into another tongue. It would be only fair to add, as a 7th phase of attainment, the didactic-declamatory, exemplified in *Queen Mab;* for in that department (as already remarked) this poem, however juvenile and imperfect, and however unsatisfactory the class of work may itself be, stands uncommonly high. I perceive only one sort of thing which Shelley attempted with indifferent success—sustained narrative. That is the main practical ingredient, though not the intellectual motive power, of the three early works, *Alastor*, the *Revolt of Islam*, and *Rosalind and Helen*. In each of these instances, or at any rate the first two, he succeeded well in allying narrative to idealism, but in all three there is a peccant element of unrealism, a slippery hold upon the human, which makes the result approach to the conditions of failure. He is a Jacob wrestling with angels after professedly accepting the challenges of earthly athletes. When we consider that the highly varied and transcendently beautiful poetic result above referred to was all the doing of a young man under thirty, we recognize an intellect only less versatile than sublime; and the mind collapses under the weight of surmise as to what he might have found it possible to achieve had an ordinary span of life, of from fifty to seventy years, been allotted to him. It remains no doubt none the less true that in Shelley the predominant quality of all is the ideal; and that this tinges most of his work, and at times even blemishes it. He was himself particularly attached to the metaphysical element in his poetry, which is of course one

great constituent of its idealism. But to lose sight of the other qualities is to shut our eyes to salient facts and indisputable triumphs. When anybody can point, in English literature, to a better modern tragedy than *The Cenci*, a predecessor of *Julian and Maddalo* in the same class of the poetic-familiar, a much choicer bit of intellectual grotesque than *Peter Bell the Third*, or translations superior to those from Homer, Euripides, and Göthe, let him do so; and then, not before, let him parrot the old cry that the ideal, whether in the way of invention and imagery, or of lyrical or rhetorical work (though even this would not be so very narrow a field), is the sum and substance of Shelley.

The poet sent *Julian and Maddalo* to Hunt on the 15th of August 1819, to be published anonymously; but no such publication took place during his lifetime—for what reason I do not find explained. Mr. Ollier appears to have suggested that it should come out in the same volume with the *Prometheus*, to which Shelley objected on account of the essential difference of style. The non-appearance of *Julian and Maddalo*, with the poet's name to it, is to be regretted; as its general tone, and especially the interest which must have attached to it as introducing Byron, would probably have promoted Shelley's repute among ordinary readers beyond what could be hoped for from any of his other works save only *The Cenci*.

XX.—ROME AND NAPLES.

Shelley, with his wife and Miss Clairmont, reached Rome on the 20th of November. "Since I last wrote to you" (he says to Peacock in a letter of the 22nd of December) "I have seen the ruins of Rome, the Vatican, St Peter's, and all the miracles of ancient and modern art contained in that majestic city. The impression of it exceeds anything I ever experienced in my travels. We stayed there only a week, intending to return at the end of February, and devote two or three months to its mines of inexhaustible contemplation. . . . The Forum is a plain in the midst of Rome, a kind of desert full of heaps of stones and pits; and, though so near the habitations of men, is the most desolate place you can conceive. The ruins of temples stand in and around it; shattered columns; and ranges of others complete, supporting cornices of exquisite workmanship; and vast vaults of shattered domes distinct with regular com-

partments, once filled with sculptures of ivory or brass. The temples of Jupiter, and Concord, and Peace, and the Sun, and the Moon, and Vesta, are all within a short distance of this spot. Behold the wrecks of what a great nation once dedicated to the abstractions of the mind! Rome is a city, as it were, of the dead—or rather of those who cannot die, and who survive the puny generations which inhabit and pass over the spot which they have made sacred to eternity. . . . . The English burying-place is a green slope near the walls, under the pyramidal tomb of Cestius, and is, I think, the most beautiful and solemn cemetery I ever beheld. To see the sun shining on its bright grass—fresh, when we first visited it, with the autumnal dews—and hear the whispering of the wind among the leaves of the trees which have overgrown the tomb of Cestius, and the soil which is stirring in the sun-warm earth, and to mark the tombs, mostly of women and young people who were buried there, one might, if one were to die, desire the sleep they seem to sleep. Such is the human mind: and so it peoples with its wishes vacancy and oblivion."

From Rome the travellers went on to Naples—Shelley preceding the ladies by three days, and arriving on the 1st of December. He saw an assassination just as he entered the city*—a young man, pursued by a man and woman out of a shop, being stabbed to death by the former at a blow. The horror which Shelley felt and expressed at this crime met with no response from a Calabrian priest, his fellow-traveller. "External nature in these delightful regions," he remarks, "contrasts with and compensates for the deformity and degradation of humanity." This is only one of many passages in which Shelley intimates a low opinion, sometimes even a positive loathing, of the Italians. The earliest such passage naturally occurs in a letter from Milan (20th April 1818), at the opening of his Italian experiences, which, so far as scenery, climate, and general associations, were concerned, charmed him from the first. "The people here, though inoffensive enough, seem, both in body and soul, a miserable race. The men are hardly men: they look like a tribe of stupid and shrivelled slaves, and I do not think that I have seen a gleam of intelligence in the coun-

* So in Shelley's own letter, 22nd December 1818 (*Essays and Letters*, vol. ii., p. 139). Mrs. Shelley, in a letter dated in the same month (*Shelley Memorials*, p. 108) says "between Capua and Naples."

tenance of man since I passed the Alps. The women in enslaved countries are always better than the men; but they have tight-laced figures, and figures and mien which express (oh how unlike the French!) a mixture of the coquette and prude, which reminds me of the worst characteristics of the English." To the above remarks Mrs. Shelley* appends a note:—"These impressions of Shelley with regard to the Italians, formed in ignorance and with precipitation, became altogether altered after a longer stay in Italy. He quickly discovered the extraordinary intelligence and genius of this wonderful people, amidst the ignorance in which they are carefully kept by their rulers, and the vices fostered by a religious system which these same rulers have used as their most successful engine." One must accept (and I should be the last to wish attenuated) this testimony of Mrs. Shelley's: yet I confess that the published letters of her husband hardly bear it out. The following passages may be noted. "The modern Italians seem a miserable people—without sensibility, or imagination, or understanding. Their outside is polished: and an intercourse with them seems to proceed with much facility, though it ends in nothing, and produces nothing. The women are particularly empty, and, though possessed of the same sort of superficial grace, are devoid of every cultivation and refinement" (Bagni di Lucca, 25th July 1818). "I had no conception of the excess to which avarice, cowardice, superstition, ignorance, passionless lust, and all the inexpressible brutalities which degrade human nature, could be carried, until I had passed a few days at Venice" (Venice, 8th October 1818). "The common Italians are so sullen and stupid it's impossible to get information from them: at Rome . . . . the people seem superior to any in Italy (Naples, 26th January 1819). The next extract does certainly show some progression. "We see something of Italian society. The Romans please me much, especially the women; who, though totally devoid of every kind of information, or culture of the imagination or affections or understanding, and in this respect a kind of gentle savages, yet contrive to be interesting. Their extreme innocence and naïveté, the freedom and gentleness of their manners, the total absence of affectation, make an intercourse with them very like an intercourse with uncorrupted children, whom they resemble in loveliness as well as simplicity.

* *Essays and Letters*, vol. ii., p. 96.

I have seen two women in society here of the highest beauty: their brows and lips, and the moulding of the face, modelled with sculptural exactness, and the dark luxuriance of their hair floating over their fine complexions; and the lips—you must hear the commonplaces which escape from them, before they cease to be dangerous. The only inferior part are the eyes; which, though good and gentle, want the mazy depth of colour behind colour with which the intellectual women of England and Germany entangle the heart in soul-enwoven labyrinths." (Rome, 6th April 1819). But in the next almost contemporary extract we again relapse—"The Italian character does not improve upon us" (Rome, 26th April 1819): and this identical expression is used in a letter of the same date written by Mrs. Shelley to Mrs. Gisborne. All these remarks, it is true, belong to the first thirteen months of Shelley's sojourn in Italy: yet, even as late as 15th February 1821, he could term Emilia Viviani "the only Italian for whom I ever felt any interest."

Mrs. Shelley considered that the removal to and sojourn in Italy were advantageous to her husband in almost all respects; and this was probably his own predominant feeling as well. We find, however, in some of his letters, the expressions that he would some day return to England through pure weakness of heart; that he would like to be back there but for his restricted means, and would wish to dwell near London; and that England is the most free and refined of countries. Yet the climate, had there been no other objection, would have been a very serious one. In the first letter (April 1818) which Shelley wrote to Peacock from Milan, he had said—"In the chilling fogs and rains of our own country, I can scarcely be said to live;" and an entry in Mrs. Shelley's diary of 14th May 1824 (long after her husband's death) says, speaking of England: "Mine own Shelley! what a horror you had of returning to this miserable country!"

In Naples the Shelleys lodged near the Royal Gardens, facing the Bay: they were very solitary, the poet's health was bad, and he was often gloomy. Still, he had days of great enjoyment from the scenery, which he naturally enough thought the most beautiful to be found within the bounds of civilization, and from visits to Pompeii and Vesuvius; the latter he regarded as, "after the glaciers, the most impressive exhibition of the energies of nature I ever saw." The family returned to Rome

in March, intending to go back to Naples for the second half of the year 1819, but this purpose remained unfulfilled.

According to the account which Shelley gave to Byron and Medwin, he re-encountered in Naples the married lady who had proffered him her love in 1816. She had arrived in that city on the same day as himself; and, when they met, she informed him of the persistent though hopeless affection with which she had tracked his footsteps. Here also she now died; and Shelley said that he had left Naples the earlier on that account. Unless Medwin has indulged his invention in a very unjustifiable way in this matter, or unless Shelley himself did the like, we have before us this alternative; either that the poet narrated a strange tissue of delusions, or that the allegations were substantially true. I have no wish to uphold the latter (contrary to the conviction of better-informed persons) as the only admissible solution: but I think that a few symptoms of collateral evidence deserve careful attention. That Shelley became unusually melancholy at Naples is an acknowledged fact; and that ill health was not the sole cause of this is also recognized. In his *Stanzas Written in Dejection near Naples* we find a remarkable expression:

> "Alas! I have nor hope nor health,
> Nor peace within nor calm around;
> . . . . . .
> Nor fame nor power *nor love* nor leisure."

Considering the deep mutual attachment which undoubtedly subsisted between Shelley and his wife,* it is difficult to infer that he intended this statement to reflect upon her, or upon himself as related to her. It is also clear that he did not make Mary the confidante of any unhappiness which may just now have affected him, of deeper import than his ill health. Her own statement† is conclusive on this point. "Though he pre-

* I use this expression with entire confidence, but do not deny that there are *some* indications here and there that the conjugal happiness of Shelley and his wife was not an absolutely still and glassy stream—there were ripples in it. The poem *To Edward Williams* (vol. ii. p. 275) can hardly, I think, be understood in any other sense, whatever may be its further purport. This is dated 1821: so is *Ginevra*, wherein marriage is characterized as

> "life's great cheat—a thing
> Bitter to taste, sweet in imagining."

This, however, relates ratherto the *woman's* lot in married life. Captain Trelawny's *Recollections* offer some suggestions to the same general effect; and Mr. Thornton Hunt says that perhaps Mary troubled Shelley by "little habits of temper, and possibly of a refined and exacting coquettishness." Still, the utmost that can be deduced of this sort from published records makes no substantial difference in the main result—that Shelley and Mary were happy in each other, and well matched.

† Vol. ii. p. 186.

served the appearance of cheerfulness, . . . yet many hours were passed when his thoughts, shadowed by illness, became gloomy, —and then he escaped to solitude, and in verses, *which he hid from fear of wounding me*, poured forth morbid but too natural bursts of discontent and sadness. One looks back with unspeakable regret and gnawing remorse to such periods; fancying that, *had one been more alive to the nature of his feelings*, and more attentive to soothe them, such would not have existed. And yet, enjoying as he appeared to do every sight or influence of earth or sky, it was difficult to imagine that any melancholy he showed was aught but the effect of the constant pain to which he was a martyr." Some while afterwards (May 1820) Shelley wrote to Peacock that Italy had done much good to his health, and "but for certain moral causes" would probably have cured it. The "moral causes" thus reticently referred to are neither defined nor distinctly apparent. It may also deserve noting that Shelley, speaking of *Julian and Maddalo* in a letter of 15th December 1819, expressed his intention "to write three other poems, the scenes of which will be laid at Rome, Florence, *and Naples*, but the subjects of which will be all drawn from dreadful or beautiful realities, as that of this was." If the Naples romance was a myth, of course no affinity can be surmised between it and this statement; but the latter might not unnaturally suggest that something of moment had come under Shelley's observation at Naples, and, if his story was true, one might conjecture that this was the destined theme of his poem. Finally, I may call attention to Medwin's intimation (not very precisely expressed) that the verses entitled *Misery* were written in connexion with these same events. He says that the poet gave him to understand as much.

XXI.—DEATH OF WILLIAM SHELLEY, AND BIRTH OF PERCY.

Another sorrow, and one which he felt deeply, befell Shelley soon after his return to Rome. His son William died on the 7th of June,* aged three years and a half, after only a few days' illness. He was a beautiful and engaging child, and obviously the favourite of his father, who watched his deathbed for sixty

* So inscribed on the tombstone, and so in a letter of Shelley's to Mr. Peacock, written the following day. Mrs. Shelley says "6th June" (*Essays and Letters*, vol. ii. p. 178).

hours, without closing his eyes: several references to the boy are to be found among the poems, more especially after his death. Shelley, the father of four children, was now practically a childless man. The two whom Harriett had brought him were confiscated by an almost unexampled stretch of law; the two whom he must have loved yet more affectionately, if only for the sake of their mother Mary—

("And from thy side two gentle babes are born
To fill our home with smiles")*—

were now both gathered away into the quiet fold of the great shepherd Death. William was buried in the protestant cemetery at Rome. This Shelley had described (as we have seen) only half a year before to his friend Peacock in terms of tenderness and beauty that now, in retrospection, might almost seem charged with presentiment, and will seem triply so charged before the end of the fourth succeeding year. Over the fresh-closed grave, and in all the sadness of loss, Shelley could yet say: "I envy death the body far less than the oppressors the minds of those whom they have torn from me. The one can only kill the body: the other crushes the affections." An inscribed gravestone was placed in the cemetery for William during Shelley's lifetime (not under his personal direction, but seemingly under that of Miss Curran, the friend at Rome who painted the often-engraved portrait of the poet)—and, as it turned out, was wrongly placed: for, when soon afterwards that grave was opened with a view to removing the child's corpse to lie close beside his father's ashes, the bones beneath were found to be those of an adult. William's actual burial-place is not now precisely known.

But Nature had some compensation early in store for the bereaved parents. On the 12th of November 1819, at Florence, Mary gave birth to another son, her last child, Percy Florence, the present Baronet. Her sorrow for William had been most poignant; and no doubt the advent of the new baby was a great relief to Shelley, for her sake as well as his own. Percy was a somewhat delicate infant; and we read more than once of projected removals which the parents, both of them enthusiastic travellers, would otherwise have been inclined for, set aside in the interest of his health.

* *Revolt of Islam*, Dedication.

Between the dates of William's death and Percy's birth the Shelleys had been staying at the Villa Valsovano, between Leghorn and Monte Nero. Here Shelley again saw a great deal of Mrs. Gisborne and her husband; and was initiated by her into the reading of Spanish, especially Calderon's plays. Mr. Charles Clairmont, who visited Shelley at this time *en route* to Vienna, having been a year or more in Spain, was also of use to the poet's Spanish studies. We owe to these his fine translation from the *Magico Prodigioso:* he regarded Calderon as next to Shakspeare among mediæval dramatists, and far superior to the Elizabethans, such as Beaumont and Fletcher. Another and less manifestly congenial matter engaged Shelley much at this period. He started a scheme for a steamer to ply between Marseilles and Leghorn, for the pecuniary benefit of the Gisbornes, and of Mr. Henry Reveley, a son of Mrs. Gisborne by a previous marriage: he was an engineer, and engaged in the building of the steamer, which would have been the first to navigate the Gulf of Lyons. The project, however, after a great deal of interest taken in it by Shelley, and of money supplied by him, broke down—the Gisbornes and Mr. Reveley having found it necessary to return to England: they were afterwards in Italy again for a while.

The Shelleys, still with Miss Clairmont in their company, went on to Florence early in October. The climate of this city was very inimical to Shelley, the keen winds from the Apennines being overmuch for his nerves. Probably also the water, which is here impregnated with lime, disagreed with him. It would be sure to do so if, as Medwin says, he suffered from nephritis; and we find it recorded in Shelley's letters that the bad water at Ravenna tortured him at a later date, and that the not needing to distil water at Pisa was one serious motive in favour of that city as a residence.*

During his stay in Florence, he was wont to pass several hours daily in the galleries, and made a study of art, more especially sculpture, going a good deal beyond anything he had previously attempted or felt impelled towards. This study so grew upon him that afterwards, in Pisa, he regarded it as a great loss of happiness to be, in comparison with the opportunities of Rome and Florence, cut off from works of art.

* *Essays and Letters*, vol. ii. pp. 259, 261.

XXII.—SHELLEY ON THE FINE ARTS.

I will here collect, though in a very summary and imperfect manner, some details of Shelley's feeling concerning the fine arts, not including poetry. He has left, both in letters and in separate memoranda, various observations on the subject, which the student of his opinions should consult for information, and very generally for force and beauty of expression.

In his early youth he was indifferent to the fine arts of form, including architecture: but afterwards he took a deeply admiring interest in sculpture, and at a later date in painting as well. From boyhood, however, he had a habit of sketching or scrawling on books or loose paper—as for instance pines and cedars, in memory of those at Field Place; or afterwards reminiscences of objects of nature at Lymouth, mountains, spectres, or any form, graceful or fantastic, that flitted across his inner eye. I have seen some of these scribblings, proper to 1812 and to his closing years, and discern in them a certain readiness of touch which seems to speak to early training, of the milder "drawing-master" kind, neither wholly lost nor much improved upon by after practice. Here it is a tree, in the style of what the drawing-master terms "foliage"; there a church-steeple, with two devils on the balustrade, one of them smoking a pipe; or again a man straddling with supreme disregard of his vertebral column.

At the period of which we are now speaking, Shelley's sojourn in Italy, he turned his attention seriously to questions of art; going so far as to say that one of his chief objects in that country was to observe, "in statuary and painting, the degree in which, and the rules according to which, that ideal beauty of which we have so intense yet so obscure an apprehension is realized in external forms." His chief admiration was naturally given to Grecian art: in sculpture as in other manifestations of intellect he found the Greeks to be "the gods whom we should worship." In painting he placed Raphael highest, and next him (hear it, ye Preraphaelites and Ruskinians!) Guido and Salvator Rosa. The works of these three painters, indeed, he regarded* as "the only things that sustain the comparison" with the antique. We trace here the wondrous docility of mind with which a sympathetic observer who is no expert can be

* Letter of 23d March 1819.

talked into fancying that he sees in particular works the qualities which they are credited with, and which he knows, from his own elevated perceptions, would be the highest of qualities if only they were actually there. All Europe was bedribbled, in Shelley's time, with nonsense about the ideal beauty of Guido, and the titanic sublime of Salvator: and Shelley, who knew the true and incommensurable value of the sublime and ideal, was teachable enough to suppose he really saw them while his sight was engaged upon upturned whites of eyes, posing limbs, and zigzag lightning amid tattered pines. This at least is the only explanation I can offer to myself of the result—intense admiration of Guido and Salvator—arising from these *data*; Shelley, who really knew what idealism, beauty, and sublimity, are,—and Guido and Salvator, who pretended to embody them upon canvas. And this may be said without denying to those painters such measure of genius and attainment as they assuredly did possess and show forth. But even Shelley "drew the line somewhere": he drew it above the Carracci and Domenichino, spite of the stertorous applause with which the performances of these artists have always, and especially about his time, been greeted. He also rejected the allurements of the Roman arabesque style.

To Michael Angelo Shelley did no justice—unless perhaps quite towards the last. Here again his opinions were those of a beginner—a quite sincere beginner at any rate, as, instead of chiming in with the real or supposititious connoisseurs, he boldly stood by his own impressions (which are in fact almost universally the veritable impressions on this subject of people who have not largely studied and compared fine art), and avowed himself revolted with the physical grandeur, the colossal externalism, of the Florentine demigod. "He has not only no temperance, no modesty, no feeling for the just boundaries of art (and in these respects an admirable genius may err), but he has no sense of beauty, and to want this is to want the sense of the creative power of mind. . . . But hell and death are his real sphere." If, with respect to Michael Angelo, Shelley had thoroughly laid to heart his own valuable theory "that the canons of taste, if known, are irrefragable, and that these are to be sought in the most admirable works of art,"* he would

* These terms are not Shelley's own, but Mrs. Shelley's as a summing-up of her husband's views (Preface to the *Essays and Letters*, p. xvii.)

sooner or later have come to a different or greatly modified conclusion. In fact, he appears finally to have enlarged his perception, for we find in his admirable *Defence of Poetry*, written in 1821, the following passage: "It exceeds all imagination to conceive what would have been the moral condition of the world if neither Dante, Petrarch, Boccaccio, Chaucer, Shakspeare, Calderon, Lord Bacon, nor Milton, had ever existed; if Raphael *and Michael Angelo* had never been born; if the Hebrew poetry had never been translated; if a revival of the study of Greek literature had never taken place; if no monuments of ancient sculpture had been handed down to us; and if the poetry of the religion of the ancient world had been extinguished together with its belief." The passage in *Marenghi* relative to the greatness of Florentine sculpture must also be held to include—and even principally to apply to—Michael Angelo. This poem was written before Shelley had studied the works of that mighty genius with any amplitude.

His visit to Pompeii was very impressive and delightful to Shelley, partly from the beauty of individual works, and especially from the free play allowed to natural influences. "I now understand why the Greeks were such great poets; and above all I can account, it seems to me, for the harmony, the unity, the perfection, the uniform excellence, of all their works of art. They lived in a perpetual commerce with external nature, and nourished themselves upon the spirit of its forms. Their theatres were all open to the mountains and the sky: . . . the odour and the freshness of the country penetrated the cities." In another connexion, after visiting Ravenna, he observes: "It seems to have been one of the first effects of the Christian religion to destroy the power of producing beauty in art."

With respect to architecture, Shelley was greatly struck, besides various antique buildings, with the splendour of Milan Cathedral, more especially its outside. He was no admirer of St Peter's; and one can see, on more occasions than one, how much less impressed he was by the architectural than by the natural beauties of the scenes he visited—as, for instance, Palestrina and the Baths of Caracalla.

As a boy, he loved music: "he could not bear any turns or twists in music, but liked a tune played quite simply." This art, indeed, affected him deeply; and, though there is nothing to show that he had any practical knowledge of it, he could go

to the small extent of playing a tune on the piano with one hand (if not possibly somewhat further than this). Yet he had not, properly speaking, "an ear for music," nor was he at all in the habit of singing or humming tunes. To decidedly ugly sounds he was painfully sensitive; as for instance the voice of a Scotch servant-girl at his Edinburgh lodgings recorded by Hogg. Yet I think we are scarcely bound to believe that "*whenever* she entered the room, or even came to the door, he rushed wildly into a corner, and covered his ears with his hands." When asked what she had had for dinner, the damsel invariably replied "Sengit heed and bonnocks"; and this produced from Shelley, seemingly with the like constancy, the appeal—"Send her away, Harriett! oh send her away! for God's sake, send her away!" Shortly before his leaving England in 1818, he became an assiduous frequenter of the Italian opera, luxuriating much in Mozart; and was singularly delighted with one ballet, as danced by Madlle. Milanie. Of ordinary theatres he saw very little: in fact, as far as comedy was concerned, he entertained a strong feeling of moral aversion. "*There* is comedy in its perfection," he said in one instance. "Society grinds down poor wretches into the dust of abject poverty, till they are scarcely recognizable as human beings; and then—instead of being treated as what they really are, subjects of the deepest pity—they are brought forward as grotesque monstrosities to be laughed at."

XXIII.—PROMETHEUS AND THE CENCI.

We have now come to Shelley's zenith. Like a Dante passing from heaven to heaven under the escort of Beatrice, the poet of *Julian and Maddalo* stepped at once into another demesne of poetry, and yet into another: in each he plucked and now wears its own peculiar, long-delaying, unperishing laurel.

There is, I suppose, no poem comparable, in the fair sense of that word, to *Prometheus Unbound*. The immense scale and boundless scope of the conception; the marble majesty and extra-mundane passions of the personages; the sublimity of ethical aspiration; the radiance of ideal and poetic beauty which saturates every phase of the subject, and almost (as it were) wraps it from sight at times, and transforms it out of sense into spirit; the rolling river of great sound and lyrical

rapture; form a combination not to be matched elsewhere, and scarcely to encounter competition. There is another source of greatness in this poem neither to be foolishly lauded nor (still less) undervalued. It is this:—that *Prometheus Unbound*, however remote the foundation of its subject-matter, and unactual its executive treatment, does in reality express the most modern of conceptions—the utmost reach of speculation of a mind which burst up all crusts of custom and prescription like a volcano, and imaged forth a future wherein man should be indeed the autocrat and renovated renovator of his planet. This it is, I apprehend, which places *Prometheus* clearly, instead of disputably, at the summit of all latter poetry:* the fact that it embodies, in forms of truly ecstatic beauty, the dominant passion of the dominant intellects of the age, and especially of one of the extremest and highest among them all, the author himself. It is the ideal poem of perpetual and triumphant progression—the Atlantis of Man Emancipated.

This supreme work was not yet completed when another only less great (many excellent judges think it the higher of the two) was also produced. I have already referred to *The Cenci* as the noblest English tragedy of modern times—a position which has been very generally and unreservedly accorded to it. The question of comparative merit is one to be determined according to sympathy rather than direct comparison; and those minds—for the most part the soundest and finest—which embrace human character in powerful conflict and interaction as the one unrivalled subject of poetry are fully justified in preferring *The Cenci* to *Prometheus*. I have stated above the ultimate ground for my own contrary estimate: the *Prometheus* is a typical work in a quite other sense than *The Cenci*, and, being typical not only of the highest things but most emphatically of the inventor's mind, it is, I think, his one unparalleled masterpiece. *The Cenci* is moreover, if I am not mistaken, a more chequered achievement; the characters of Count Cenci and Beatrice, and all the portion of the play in which they figure, being throughout a weft very superior to the warp which consti-

* I confine my view solely to *English* poetry: one or two very great foreign names must occur to the reader's mind, and abash mine from so much as taking them into account. I may add that nothing is said in the text about the flaws perceptible in *Prometheus Unbound*—occasional supersubtleties of thought, defects of execution, &c. &c.: not that I dispute their being there, but that my immediate purpose does not demand their indication.

tutes the residue. With these mere generalities, and referring the reader to the drama itself, and Shelley's preface and his wife's notes, for further elucidation, I leave this splendid performance. In my own notes will likewise be found, as regards both *The Cenci* and *Prometheus*, many particulars as to the views and aims of Shelley in relation to them, especially as to his wish to get the former acted on the stage.

Prometheus Unbound was begun while the poet was staying at Byron's villa at Este in or about September 1818, and was continued, to the end of the third act, up to the early days of April 1819: the fourth lyrical act was an afterthought, only completed late in December of the same year, at Florence. The estimation in which the poem was held by enlightened contemporaries is enshrined in the anecdote that Campbell, the now rapidly evanescent artificer of *Pleasures of Hope* and *Gertrude of Wyoming*,* said to Medwin: "*Prometheus Unbound* —it is well named: who would *bind* it?"

The Cenci was written chiefly in the Villa Valsovano, being begun on the 14th of May, and finished towards the middle of August 1819.† Shelley said to Trelawny: "I don't think much of it: it gave me less trouble than anything I have written of the same length." To Peacock he wrote that the composition had been "a fine antidote to nervous medicines, and kept up, I think, the pain in my side, as sticks do a fire."

The Cenci and *Prometheus* were respectively published in England in or about March and August 1820.

XXIV.—POEMS ON SUBJECTS OF THE DAY.

It may be convenient to group together here at once a few

* These heavy and pappy performances will no doubt be long survived by some of the national lyrics of the same author, which are indeed very fine. As Medwin affirms (*Life of Shelley*, vol. i. p. 334, and vol. ii. p. 196) that Campbell used the expression above quoted in talking to Medwin himself, we are bound to credit that he did so. However, it was not Campbell's own joke, but Theodore Hooke's, in the *John Bull*. The *Literary Gazette* also got hold of it; for the review of *Prometheus* in that paper says—"We turn to *Prometheus Unbound*, humbly conceiving that this punning title-page is the soothest in the book, as no one can ever think him worth binding." I believe Campbell was not a contributor to the *Literary Gazette*, and should not therefore be branded, even by surmise, as the vile and loathsome ruffian who wrote that critique. The vomit of creation who wrote a review of *Queen Mab* in the same paper (see p. cxl.) was apparently a different person; for he admitted some poetic ability in *Queen Mab* and in Shelley, whereas the reviewer of *Prometheus* acknowledged absolutely none,—and the like, to all intents and purposes, may be said of the reviewer of *The Cenci*, probably the same individual.

† Shelley, in a letter to Leigh Hunt, dated 15th August 1819, says he is "on the eve of completing" this tragedy: Lady Shelley therefore antedates it a little in stating (*Shelley Memorials*, p. 114) that it was finished "a month or two after" the date given to its dedication, 29th May.

poems of Shelley's inspired by incidents, fertile of indignation or of laughter, then going on in England.

The most valuable of these is *Peter Bell the Third*, which indeed has always appeared to me a *chef d'œuvre* of its kind, indicating possibilities of power in Shelley which it would certainly have been as contrary to his wishes as to his habits to work to any great extent, but which would have qualified him to descend into the arena of partisan satire, and to sear many doggish foreheads and readily-turned backs with the indelible brand of his scorn.* Nor is this the only poem in which a similar faculty is conspicuous. *Peter Bell the Third* is no doubt, and from its subject and tone must be, a much slighter as well as less finished performance than Byron's *Vision of Judgment;* but I think it is only inferior, and not very greatly so either, to that burst of Olympic cachinnation, that ever-pointing finger of obloquy. Shelley's squib—(for it is and professes to be no more, only that the squib which a Uriel can fire off differs considerably from that of a Guy-Fawkes boy)—was concocted during or immediately after his stay at the Villa Valsovano.

His other satirical work, *Swellfoot the Tyrant*, was begun a year later, August 1820. Shelley appears a little out of his groove here: one might compare him to a good public speaker in the pathetic style, who, taking up the humorous style at a moment's notice, finds himself quite capable of working it, but unelastic in gesture and play of countenance. Still, *Swellfoot* also is a choice performance, with a spice of Aristophanic and another of Rabelaisian grotesque, none the less genuinely Shelleyan, and therefore truly imaginative. The drama was printed and just published anonymously ("London, published for the Author by J. Johnston, 98 Cheapside, and sold by all Booksellers, 1820")† when a menace from the Society for the Suppression of Vice caused its immediate withdrawal. The intelligent reader will no doubt not believe that it was written in a fit of entire Carolinian enthusiasm. If he does, he will be un-

* The poet was not unconscious of his capacities in this line. One of his letters, dated 25th January 1822, says, "I began once a satire upon satire, which I meant to be very severe: it was full of small knives, in the use of which practice would have soon made me very expert." Of this satire I find no trace nor even mention elsewhere; unless (which I can hardly suppose) it is of as early a date as 1810. A letter from Shelley to Hogg, dated 20th December 1810 (Hogg, vol. i. p. 143) says—"I am composing a satirical poem—I shall print it at Oxford."

† Does any human creature save only Mr. Trelawny possess a copy of this effusion in its original form?

deceived by the following extract from a letter which Shelley addressed to Mr. Peacock on the 12th of July 1820. "Nothing, I think, shows the generous gullibility of the English nation more than their having adopted her sacred Majesty as the heroine of the day, in spite of all their prejudices and bigotry. I, for my part, of course wish no harm to happen to her, even if she has, as I firmly believe, amused herself in a manner rather indecorous with any courier or baron. But I cannot help adverting to it as one of the absurdities of royalty that a vulgar woman, with all those low tastes which prejudice considers as vices, and a person whose habits and manners every one would shun in private life, without any redeeming virtues, should be turned into a heroine because she is a queen, or, as a collateral reason, because her husband is a king, and he, no less than his ministers, is so odious that everything, however disgusting, which is opposed to them, is admirable."

About the same time as *Peter Bell the Third*, Shelley wrote the *Masque of Anarchy*, the record of his fiery and righteous zeal against the authors of that "Manchester Massacre" which was then crimsoning the soil and the cheeks of Englishmen—a slaughter, by the mounted yeomanry, of several men and women who were attending an open-air Reform meeting at Peterloo. This poem was sent in November 1819 to Hunt for publication in the *Examiner*; but was withheld for prudential reasons, and never saw the light until separately printed in 1832. With great elevation of soul, and many splendid and unforgettable stanzas, *The Masque of Anarchy* is not, I think, exactly a masterpiece. One perceives that in it Shelley is writing something other than his own style; and the further he deviates from that, or the nearer he comes to the conditions he has chosen to prescribe for himself, so much the more faltering is his pace. There is a half-dozen of shorter poems, belonging to the same year, also denunciatory of the then political condition of England. These again, and on similar grounds, are among Shelley's less successful compositions: though the sonnet, *England in* 1819, and the *Similes for Two Political Characters*, have great energy of virus. He had a strong impression about this time that the misgovernment of his native country would bring on bankruptcy and actual revolution.

XXV.—PISA TO RAVENNA :—EPIPSYCHIDION.

On the 26th of January 1820 the Shelleys removed to Pisa :* and in or about May, for the sake of the infant Percy's health, to the Bagni di Pisa (or di San Giuliano), four miles off. Shelley's own health also benefited here. At Pisa he had seen a good deal of the celebrated physician Vaccà, who recommended him to leave his ailments to nature, without medicine, which he mainly did henceforward : the acquaintance with this distinguished man was the more pleasant to Shelley, as their liberal political views were in sympathy. Some portion of the spring and summer was spent likewise at the house recently occupied by the Gisbornes at Leghorn. In August the Shelleys were back at the Bagni di Pisa.

Somewhere about this time, Shelley (we are told) having called at the Pisa Post-Office, an English officer in the Portuguese service apostrophized him with the exclamation, "What! are you that damned atheist Shelley?" and, without more ado, struck him to the ground with a stick, stunning him at the moment. He was a tall and powerful man. Shelley looked up his acquaintance Mr. Tighe (a son of the authoress of the poem of *Psyche*), "who lost no time in taking measures to obtain satisfaction."† The proficient in theism and blackguardism was traced to the hotel of the Tre Donzelle, and thence to Genoa, whither Mr. Tighe (and it is said Shelley also) followed him : but he was never run down. This is another of the singular stories told by Shelley, and discredited by most of his hearers or biographers : the inclination of my own mind would be to accept it, were it not that I find Mr. Trelawny a decided disbeliever. Another authority informs me that some adventure of some kind or other did undeniably occur to Shelley at *a* Post-Office—but this was the Post-Office of Rome, and the date 6th May 1819.

* As I understand it, Miss Clairmont now remained behind at Florence, and was not again domesticated with the Shelleys—may indeed never have seen Shelley more. She appears, however, from a letter of the poet's, dated 28th April 1822 (*Essays and Letters*, vol. ii. p. 280), to have been then with Mrs. Shelley at Spezia, close by Lerici. Captain Medwin met Miss Clairmont living *en pension* in Florence in 1820.

† This is the expression used by Medwin (*Shelley Papers*, p. 59). It is obviously rather a loose one, considering that the assailant was never brought to book, and I am not sure whether or not we ought to understand it as implying that Shelley meant to fight a duel. Probably it does : though the poet "had some scruples about duelling," as appears, *inter alia*, from an anecdote, of trivial consequence, as to his receiving a sort of pettish challenge from Dr. Polidori in 1816, on account of some dispute in boating. This Shelley laughed off, but Byron resented it a little more seriously.

Possibly the narrator, Medwin, is more abroad in the auxiliary than in the leading circumstances of the case.

This gentleman*—"Captain Medwin, of the 24th Light Dragoons"—Shelley's second cousin and old schoolfellow, was now in Italy on his return from Bombay, and the poet invited him to his house at the Bagni di Pisa. It may have been towards the end of October that he arrived. A few days afterwards the Serchio river and a connecting canal overflowed their banks, flooded the neighbouring houses, including the Shelley's, and dictated a rapid retreat. They and Medwin returned accordingly to Pisa, which, of all the cities visited by the poet, was on the whole the one that suited his health best. He lived on the south side of the Arno, next door to the marble palace which stands inscribed "Alla Giornata." Medwin had a severe attack of illness here, and Shelley tended him for six weeks with unremitting and minute carefulness.

It was soon afterwards that Shelley became acquainted with the beautiful Contessina Emilia Viviani, with whom he had a long-memorable *affaire de cœur*—as it may perhaps be most appropriately termed. He knew a certain Professor or ex-Professor P., an ecclesiastic, and confessor in the family of the Conte Viviani. The "Professore" is amusingly sketched by Medwin, and seems to have been a scamp of the impurest water—at any rate a very talented, accomplished, and learned scamp, and a first-rate talker.† He spoke to Shelley of the two daughters of the Conte, who, in consequence of the dislike of a young stepmother, had been shut up in convents—the elder, Emilia, in the Convent of St Anne, in the suburbs of Pisa: and he proposed to introduce Shelley to her. I do not find the exact date given, but presume it to have been late in the autumn of 1820. Shelley visited Emilia, and was enraptured with her: her dreary seclusion, under which she pined miserably, the beauty equally of her mind and person, excited his tenderest sympathies. He made unsuccessful efforts to obtain her liberation from the convent, and exchanged locks of hair with her. Many of her letters to Shelley are still extant. Mostly she addresses him as "Caro Fratello," but in at least one instance she

* He died at an advanced age this summer, 1869.

† The *bon-mot* which is said to have cost him his professorial chair is too neat to be omitted. He was out at night in the streets of Pisa in company not strictly ecclesiastic or academic; and, being challenged by the patrol, replied—"Son un uomo pubblico, in una strada pubblica, con una donna pubblica."

uses the startling term "Adorato Sposo."* "Emilia," says Medwin, "was indeed lovely and interesting. Her profuse black hair, tied in the most simple knot, after the manner of a Greek Muse in the Florence Gallery, displayed to its full height her brow, fair as that of the marble of which I speak. She was also of about the same height as the antique. Her features possessed a rare faultlessness and almost Grecian† contour, the nose and forehead making a straight line. Her eyes had the sleepy voluptuousness, if not the colour, of Beatrice Cenci's. They had indeed no definite colour; changing with the changing feelings to dark or light, as the soul animated them. Her cheek was pale too, as of marble—owing to her confinement and want of air, or perhaps 'to thought.'" Emilia Viviani was soon after visited by Mrs. Shelley, as well as her husband, and in the carnival was allowed to pay them visits in return. Some further particulars concerning her will be found in my notes to *Epipsychidion.*

The one thing which it is important to know about her now is that she inspired that subtle and astonishing poem. I am not aware that even

"A scandal-monger beyond all belief"

has ever said or insinuated that Shelley's love for Emilia (for love, in a certain sense, it may clearly be called) was other than "Platonic:" if anybody *has* said so, the statement is presumably as unworthy of attention as it is incapable of mathematical disproof. The reader who observes that *Epipsychidion* is the only one of Shelley's long poems to which his widow appended no word of comment may perhaps infer that the Platonization was not absolutely to her mind: but that is neither here nor there. The poem—to take it on its own showing—reveals a state of feeling which most people have never experienced; and this moreover it describes in terms which they cannot understand. As a pure outpouring of poetry, a brimming and bubbling fountain of freshness and music, magical with its own spray-rainbows, *Epipsychidion* is beyond praise, and beyond description. I may confess, however, to doubting whether it is quite a justifiable sort of poem to write. Its very mood of mind tends to-

* The passage, I am informed, is much to the following effect. Emilia is comparing herself to flowers at dawn-time, which have all the freshness of the dew upon them, and whose honey has been robbed as yet by no bee: "You alone have been my bee, *O adorato sposo.*"

† The word is printed "German" in Medwin's book; but one cannot doubt that it ought to be "Grecian."

wards the intangible; and its framework of imagery or symbol remains to this day an enigma to students of the poetry and the life of Shelley—and this *as* a framework, not to speak of difficulties of detail or diction. But Shelley, like Zeus, was a cloud-compeller; and, of *his* clouds, even the most vaporous refuses to disperse.

The poem was written before the beginning of 1821, and was sent in February to London, and there published, semi-published, or nominally published, without Shelley's name. There was a small edition to be had for the buying, and no buyer applied. Shortly after this, Shelley wrote his noble *Defence of Poetry*, in reply to an article by Peacock in Ollier's *Literary Miscellany*. The *Defence* is an incomplete treatise, as two other parts were to have been written, but they never got done.

Early in 1821 Medwin brought Shelley acquainted with Edward Ellerker Williams, formerly a lieutenant in the 8th Dragoons, and his wife Jane. Lieutenant Williams had at first been in the navy, and then some years in India: he was just about the same age as Shelley, or in his thirtieth year, with something of a consumptive tendency, lately come upon him.* Medwin says that he was a lineal descendant of a daughter of Cromwell. The Williamses were in the enjoyment of fairly competent means, and had two children. This acquaintance, which soon ripened into friendship, proved eminently pleasing to all concerned. Williams was gentle, generous, and fearless, fond of the water and manly exercises, with some faculty for drawing, and (it would seem) for poetry as well. Of Mrs. Williams, whose musical proficiency and taste were a great delight to Shelley, we know from himself that she realized his antecedent conception of the Lady in *The Sensitive Plant:* could any more be said? The warmth of Shelley's feelings for Mrs. Williams, as disclosed in the various exquisite poems he addressed to her† —and which all passed through her husband's hands—may indeed be said to hover on the confine between friendship and love; a love as refined and delicate as it was tender, and such as the true husband of Mary and genuinely attached friend of Williams could without blame both entertain and avow. Such a sentiment is one of the purest as well as most beautiful known to man.

* Medwin mentions this, with confirmatory details: I found Mr. Trelawny both unaware and sceptical of the alleged fact.

† See the poems, *Remembrance* (vol. ii. p. 274) &c., and my notes upon them.

These were years of revolution: and indeed what years, since the great disintegration of 1789-93, have not been so? and how many more are we not destined to see until the work of those mighty days shall be in some approximate degree openly accepted and firmly constituted? Spain and Naples had risen in 1820, and had been welcomed by the noble enthusiasm and the not less noble strains of Shelley: now, in 1821, it was the turn of Greece. On the 1st of April Prince Alexander Mavrocordato, whose acquaintance the poet had made at Pisa, called upon him, produced a proclamation issued by his cousin Prince Ypsilanti, and declared that Greece—the Holy Land of Shelley's heart and intellect—would once again be free. The result was the drama of *Hellas*, of which more anon.

The Shelleys were now no longer leading the secluded—sometimes solitary—life which had mostly been their lot in Italy, and which (as the reader may have already noted) was likely to be little to the taste of Mary, nor entirely so to her husband's, though it must be regarded as reasonably congenial, in the long run, to his real and deeper requirements. At present Medwin was in their house, and had been studying Arabic with the poet: Mavrocordato was the most constant visitor, and used to play at chess with Shelley, who was not a good hand at the game: the Williamses were on terms of increasing intimacy;—and he already saw something in private of Sgricci, the famous improvisatore, whose faculty filled Shelley with admiring wonder.* Towards the end of this year, the circle of his acquaintances in Pisa enlarged greatly. Shelley and Williams did a good deal of boating together on the Arno, the Serchio, and its canal; recorded in the beautiful fragment *The Boat on the Serchio*, and in the note of Mrs. Shelley (which the reader should consult for details) to the poems of 1821. By July she and her husband were again at the Bagni di Pisa.

Hence Shelley went to pay Byron a visit at Ravenna, which he reached on the evening of the 6th of August. "One would think" (he wrote to his wife on that day, while at Bologna *en route*) "that I were the spaniel of Destiny; for, the more she knocks me about, the more I fawn on her. I had an overturn about daybreak; the old horse stumbled, and threw me and the

* The MS. book by Shelley which has passed through my hands contains a longish criticism by the English poet, written in Italian, of the improvisation of the tragedy of *Ettore* by Sgricci. It appears to have been done for publication in some review. Sgricci was born near Arezzo in 1788, and died in 1836.

fat vetturino into a slope of meadow, over the hedge. My angular figure stuck where it was pitched; but my vetturino's spherical form rolled fairly to the bottom of the hill, and that with so few symptoms of reluctance in the life that animated it that my ridicule (for it was the drollest sight in the world) was suppressed by my fear that the poor devil had been hurt. But he was very well."

XXVI.—THE WITCH OF ATLAS, ADONAIS, HELLAS.

For convenience sake, I link here these three poems, the last compositions of some length (excluding *Epipsychidion*, already mentioned, and *Charles the First* and the *Triumph of Life*, both unfinished) that the thaumaturgic hand of Shelley was destined to indite. In strictness, however, we have already overpassed the date of the *Witch of Atlas*, and not quite reached that of *Hellas*.

The former was written in August 1820, in three days following a pedestrian excursion which Shelley had made alone up the Monte San Pellegrino, starting from the Bagni di Pisa. He sent it off to Mr. Ollier on the 20th of January 1821, but it was not published till after the poet's death. Neither Shelley nor any one else tells us who or what the Witch of Atlas is; and I am surprised not to find the subject so much as debated in any book of biography or elucidation. It appears to me that, if we understand the Witch to be the Spirit (or *a* Spirit) of Beauty, in the most unrestricted sense of that word, we shall find significant many passages in the poem which otherwise read as mere brilliant fantasies: not that I perceive this clue to lead into *every* intricate recess and twilight cranny of the maze. If it fails in delicate hands, we may perhaps assume that, along with the symbolism or intention of the poem, Shelley mixed up some elements of what may be called a "fairy tale," equally enchanting, imperishable, and arbitrary. However this may be, he never, or scarcely at all, did anything more splendid than the *Witch of Atlas:* from first to last, it is consummate in imagination and workmanship. To some extent it pairs with *Epipsychidion;* and I decidedly think it the finer product of the two.

Keats died on the 23d of February 1821 at Rome: Shelley (who had some months before invited his brother poet to stay with him in Italy, but without any direct result) did not know of

his death immediately, but, having learned it, he wrote *Adonais* in or about May as "the image of his regret and honour for poor Keats," and considered it "perhaps better, in point of execution, than anything he had written." The beauty and energy of its treatment are assuredly very great; and it will always possess an exceptional interest, as the tribute of love and admiration which one great poet eagerly paid to another, and as the record of his scorn against the literary bats who, by instinct and preference combined, had been flying for years past with leathern wings in the face of the light. If we distinguish between the execution and interest of the work on one side, and its poetical invention on the other, it may be doubted whether *Adonais* will eventually take, in the latter respect, a first-class position among Shelley's poems: to conceive such a subject from a truly original point of view is supremely difficult, and I question whether even Shelley can be said to have entirely attained to that. But, while one is reading *Adonais*, all such demur is waived in delight at the wonderful flow of poetry.

Any argument to prove the genuineness of Shelley's enthusiasm for Keats would be an impertinence; and still more impertinent any attempt to show that his enthusiasm was so beset with qualifications as not to be genuine at all. But it will be perfectly legitimate to exhibit, from Shelley's own writings, what was the precise balance of his mind on this subject. The first thing to be observed is that he admired *Hyperion* incomparably more than any other composition of its author; and the next, that, in the residue, he found much more to indicate genius than to justify the particular shapes in which that had developed itself. I shall here set down the principal observations; after which *Adonais* (with its preface) will have to speak for itself, as embodying what Shelley found it really essential to tell the world about Keats, when the work of the latter was accomplished, and its total value roughly ascertainable. "I have read Keats's poem [*Endymion*]: much praise is due to me for having read it, the author's intention appearing to be that no person should possibly get to the end of it. Yet it is full of some of the highest and the finest gleams of poetry; indeed, everything seems to be viewed by the mind of a poet which is described in it. I think, if he had printed about fifty pages of fragments from it, I should have been led to admire Keats as a poet more than I ought, of which there is now no danger."

(6th September 1819). "I have lately read your *Endymion* again, and even with a new sense of the treasures of poetry it contains, though treasures poured forth with indistinct profusion. This people in general will not endure; and that is the cause of the comparatively few copies which have been sold. I feel persuaded that you are capable of the greatest things, so you but will." (To Keats, 27th July 1820).* "Keats's new volume has arrived to us, and the fragment called *Hyperion* promises for him that he is destined to become one of the first writers of the age. His other things are imperfect enough, and, what is worse, written in the bad sort of style which is becoming fashionable among those who fancy that they are imitating Hunt and Wordsworth.† . . . . Where is Keats now? I am anxiously expecting him in Italy, when I shall take care to bestow every possible attention on him. I consider his a most valuable life, and I am deeply interested in his safety. I intend to be the physician both of his body and his soul; and to keep the one warm, and to teach the other Greek and Spanish. I am aware, indeed, in part, that I am nourishing a rival who will far surpass me: and this is an additional motive, and will be an added pleasure." (11th November 1820). "Among the modern things which have reached me is a volume of poems by Keats; in other respects insignificant enough, but containing the fragment of a poem called *Hyperion*. . . . . It is certainly an astonishing piece of writing, and gives me a conception of Keats which I confess I had not before." (15th November 1820). "Among your anathemas of the modern attempts in poetry do you include Keats's *Hyperion?* I think it very fine. His other poems are worth little :‡ but, if the *Hyperion* be not grand poetry, none has been produced by our contemporaries." (To Peacock, 15th February 1821). "I am willing to confess that the *Endymion* is a poem considerably defective, and that perhaps it deserved as much censure as the pages of your Review record against it: but, not to mention that there is a certain

* This very interesting letter, then in the possession of Mr. Lewes, was published in an article by that gentleman on Shelley in the *Westminster Review* for April 1841: it is not printed elsewhere, I think. Shelley hereby conveys to Keats the invitation (mentioned in our next extract) to stay with him in Pisa.

† Here follow some very severe observations on some poem or other, represented only by a —— in print. The poem indicated is not one of Keats's.

‡ Such a strong expression as this must not be taken too literally or thoroughly. Medwin says, and one can fully believe it is correct, that Shelley "often spoke with great admiration" not only of *Hyperion*, but also of *Isabella* and the *Eve of St. Agnes*.

contemptuousness of phraseology (from which it is difficult for a critic to abstain) in the review of *Endymion*, I do not think that the writer has given it its due praise. Surely the poem, with all its faults, is a very remarkable production for a man of Keats's age; and the promise of ultimate excellence is such as has rarely been afforded even by such as have afterwards attained high literary eminence. Look at book ii., line 833, &c., and book iii., line 113 to 120; read down that page, and then again from line 193. I could cite many other passages to convince you that it deserved milder usage. . . . . There was no danger that it should become a model to the age of that false taste with which I confess that it is replenished. . . . . Allow me to solicit your especial attention to the fragment of a poem entitled *Hyperion*, the composition of which was checked by the review in question. The great proportion of this piece is surely in the very highest style of poetry. I speak impartially, for the canons of taste to which Keats has conformed in his other compositions are the very reverse of my own." (To the Editor of the *Quarterly Review*, 1820, but not eventually sent).

Hellas was written in the autumn of 1821, finished about the end of October, and published early in the following spring. It must no doubt have been very rapid work, for Shelley himself terms it "a mere improvise." Based as it is in general scheme on the *Persæ* of Æschylus, and inartificially constructed out of the veering news of the day, this poem is still a solid and beautiful piece of work; and contains, especially in its lyrical choruses, many passages than which neither Shelley nor the English language has anything much better to show. It was fitting that the last complete work of some considerable length written by the glorious poet should be the expression of his deep-seated love for Greece, at a moment when to worship the land of Homer, Sophocles, and Plato, was also to hail the downfall of a crushing despotism, and the reawakening of a self-devoted people. The poet, the scholar, and the zealot of liberty, speak with one trumpet-tone in *Hellas*.

XXVII.—CRITIQUES AND SELF-CRITIQUES.

Here, unfortunately for ourselves and posterity, we have come to very nearly the close of Shelley's literary career. It may therefore now be not inappropriate to collect some of his utterances regarding his own position as a poet, and his attitude to-

wards criticism from without, very generally abusive. Some of his most important expressions on these subjects are to be found in the prefaces &c. to his poems, to which the reader should refer. I will here extract only one of these, too important to be passed over. It occurs in a letter to Godwin, consequent upon that friend's strictures upon the *Revolt of Islam*, and is given in Mrs. Shelley's note to the poem (p. 254). "In this have I long believed that my power consists; in sympathy, and that part of the imagination which relates to sentiment and contemplation. I am formed, if for anything not in common with the herd of mankind, to apprehend minute and remote distinctions of feeling, whether relative to external nature or the living beings which surround us, and to communicate the conceptions which result from considering either the moral or the material universe as a whole. Of course, I believe these faculties, which perhaps comprehend all that is sublime in man, to exist very imperfectly in my own mind. . . . . I cannot but be conscious, in much of what I write, of an absence of that tranquillity which is the attribute and accompaniment of power."

Other important observations are as follows: (I give the first merely as being the earliest definite expression that we have from Shelley on the point).—"You must know that I either am or fancy myself something of a poet." (To Godwin, 24th February 1812). "My poems* will, I fear, little stand the criticism, even of friendship. Some of the later ones have the merit of conveying a meaning in every word, and all are faithful pictures of my feelings at the time of writing them; but they are in a great measure abrupt and obscure. One fault they are indisputably exempt from—that of being a volume of fashionable literature." (January 1813). "In poetry I have sought to avoid system and mannerism: I wish those who excel me in genius would pursue the same plan." (To Keats, 27th July 1820). "My thoughts aspire to a production of a far higher character [than *Charles the First*]; but the execution of it will require some years.† I write what I write chiefly to enquire, by the

* The poems here referred to, spoken of as "a volume of Minor Poems," have never been published: unless we suppose some of those relegated to our Appendix to have been included among them. The letter from which our extract comes was written, it will be observed, about the time when *Queen Mab* was finished.

† Is this the *Triumph of Life*? One might suppose so, because, in a previous letter (16th February 1821) Shelley had said: "I *am employed* in high and new designs in verse; but they are the labours of years perhaps." Was it intended that the *Triumph of Life* should be quite a long poem, on something of the scale of Dante's *Commedia*?

reception which my writings meet with, how far I am fit for so great a task or not." (22nd February 1821). "If I understand myself, I have written neither for profit nor for fame. I have employed my poetical compositions and publications simply as the instruments of that sympathy between myself and others which the ardent and unbounded love I cherished for my kind incited me to acquire." (1821.) "The poet and the man are two different natures: though they exist together, they may be unconscious of each other, and incapable of deciding on each other's powers and efforts by any reflex act. The decision of the cause, whether or no I am a poet, is removed from the present time to the hour when our posterity shall assemble: but the court is a very severe one, and I fear that the verdict will be, *Guilty—Death.*" (19th July 1821). "I despair of rivalling Lord Byron, as well I may; and there is no other with whom it is worth contending." (9th August 1821). "How do I stand with regard to these two great objects of human pursuit [fame and money]? I once sought something nobler and better than either; but I might as well have reached at the moon, and now, finding that I have grasped the air, I should not be sorry to know what substantial sum, especially of the former,* is in your hands on my account. The gods have made the reviewers the almoners of this worldly dross; and I think I must write an ode to flatter them to give me some, if I would not that they put me off with a bill on posterity, which when my ghost shall present, the answer will be 'no effects.'" (To Mr. Ollier, 25th September 1821). "Lord Byron has read me one or two letters of Moore to him, in which Moore speaks with great kindness of me; and of course I cannot but feel flattered by the approbation of a man my inferiority to whom (!!) I am proud to acknowledge." (11th April 1822). "I do not write: I have lived too long near Lord Byron, and the sun has extinguished the glow-worm—for I cannot hope (with St. John) that 'the light came into the world, and the world knew it not.'" (May 1822).

The preceding extracts relate mainly to the poet's own estimate of his works: those which succeed have to do with his critics. "As to the Reviews, I suppose there is nothing but abuse; and this is not hearty or sincere enough to amuse me." (6th April 1819). "Of course it gives me a certain degree of

* According to the placing of the words "fame" and "money" in Shelley's letter, "the former" would mean fame: but I apprehend he really means money.

pleasure to know that any one likes my writings; but it is objection and enmity alone that rouses my *curiosity*." (6th September 1819). "If any of the Reviews abuse me, cut them out and send them: if they praise, you need not trouble yourself. I feel ashamed if I could believe that I should deserve the latter: the former, I flatter myself, is no more than a just tribute. If Hunt praises me, send it, because that is of another character of thing." (6th March 1820). "I am, speaking literarily, infirm of purpose. I have great designs, and feeble hopes of accomplishing them. I read books, and, though I am ignorant enough, they seem to teach me nothing. To be sure, the reception the public have given me might go far to damp any man's enthusiasm. They teach me, it may be said, only what is true: very true, I doubt not, and the more true the less agreeable. I can compare my experience in this respect to nothing but a series of wet blankets." (15th November 1820). "The reviews of my *Cenci* (though some of them, and especially that marked 'John Scott,' are written with great malignity) on the whole give me as much encouragement as a person of my habits of thinking is capable of receiving from such a source—which is inasmuch as they coincide with and confirm my own decisions. My next attempt (if I should write more) will be a drama, in the composition of which I shall attend to the advice of my critics, to a certain degree. But I doubt whether I *shall* write more. I could be content either with the hell or the paradise of poetry: but the torments of its purgatory vex me, without exciting my powers sufficiently to put an end to the vexation." (20th January 1821).* "I hear that the abuse against me exceeds all bounds. Pray, if you see any one article particularly outrageous, send it me. As yet, I have laughed: but woe to these scoundrels if they should once make me lose my temper. I have discovered that my calumniator in the *Quarterly Review* was the Reverend Mr Milman.† Priests have their privilege." (11th June 1821). "I write nothing, and probably shall write no more. It offends me to see my name classed among those who have no name. If I cannot be something better, I had rather be nothing. My motive was never the infirm desire of fame; and, if I should

* This letter is misdated "1820" in the *Shelley Memorials*, p. 135. It alludes to the *Witch of Atlas*, which was written in August 1820,—not to speak of other conclusive indications.

† See the note to *Adonais* (vol. ii. p. 553). The statement in our text applies to the critique of *Laon and Cythna* in 1819—not to that of *Prometheus*, which latter review was only printed in October 1821.

continue an author, I feel that I *should* desire it. This cup is justly given to one only of an age—indeed, participation would make it worthless: and unfortunate they who seek it and find it not." (10th August 1821). "Do not let my frankness with you, nor my belief that you deserve it more than Lord Byron,* have the effect of deterring you from assuming a station in modern literature which the universal voice of my contemporaries forbids *me* either to stoop or to aspire to. I am, and I desire to be, nothing." (To Leigh Hunt, with regard to the proposal of *The Liberal*, 26th August 1821). "The man must be enviably happy whom Reviews can make miserable. I have neither curiosity, interest, pain, nor pleasure, in anything, good or evil, they can say of me. I feel only a slight disgust, and a sort of wonder that they presume to write my name." (25th January 1822).

These extracts—which could easily be supplemented by the statements of biographers, were it worth while—speak for themselves. They indicate that Shelley was absolutely above the level of criticism, and was, as a poet, his own sufficient law to himself; but that, at the same time, his comparative languor of production in the last year or so of his life was partly due to the perception that, however much he might exert his poetic powers, their results met with no adequate sympathy or recognition. He would have done nothing to curry favour: being received with disfavour time after time, he was the less inclined to re-encounter it once more. Though sometimes despondent, he was by no means unconscious (as how *could* he be?) of his own powers both of reason and of imagination, of the calibre of his poems, and of their right to appeal to posterity if not to contemporaries. At one time, indeed, he had considered the poetic faculty in himself to be hardly equal to the logical and metaphysical, and perhaps he never definitely reversed this estimate: but he resolved, at an early stage of his career, to use poetry as his means of self-expression, and he directed his studies accordingly.

XXVIII.—RAVENNA TO LERICI.

Shelley, as we have seen, arrived on the 6th of August 1821

* According to the full context, the thing which Hunt "deserves more than Lord Byron," is not "station in modern literature" (which would have been a grotesque flattery on Shelley's part), but Shelley's "frankness" in explaining his own relation to the scheme proposed.

on a visit to Byron at Ravenna. The latter was now domesticated with the Countess Guiccioli, whose judicial separation from her husband had been effected; but she was just at present staying at Florence. Shelley considered Byron immensely improved by this connexion: "he is becoming what he should be —a virtuous man." Yet he soon found that the change of conduct was not exactly the result of a change in ideas,—that the quasi-husband of La Guiccioli was still essentially much the same man as the miscellaneous debauchee of Venice; and he concluded that the lady, a truly loving and loveable person, would hereafter "have plenty of leisure and opportunity to repent her rashness." Byron had at Ravenna "two monkeys,* five cats, eight dogs, and ten horses; all of whom (except the horses) walk about the house like the masters of it. Tita the Venetian [late a gondolier, and afterwards with Byron in Greece up to his death] is here, and operates as my valet; a fine fellow with a prodigious black beard, and who has stabbed two or three people, and is one of the most goodnatured-looking fellows I ever saw.

Among the first things that Shelley heard from Byron was a calumny affecting Shelley himself, in which Mr. and Mrs. Hoppner, whom he had known in Venice, were mixed up. Mr. Hoppner was Consul-General there, his wife was a native of Switzerland; and the impression which Shelley had received of them in the former instance was peculiarly favourable and sympathetic. He now wrote to Mary, asking her to refute the calumny, which he regarded as a most vile and disgraceful one. "Imagine my despair of good, imagine how is it possible that one of so weak and sensitive a nature as mine can run further the gauntlet through this hellish society of men." Mary felt as indignant as her husband, and wrote a letter in reply, which Byron engaged to forward to the Hoppners with his own comments. What this calumny was has never yet been distinctly stated. The Hoppners had for a while taken care of little Allegra, who had afterwards, by Byron's choice and with the concurrence of the Shelleys, been placed in a convent for education in the Roman Catholic faith. It is not unnatural to surmise that the libel had something to do with her: perhaps it charged her paternity upon Shelley. That it had *some* relation

* *Three* monkeys, along with "an eagle, a crow, and a falcon," are mentioned in another of Shelley's letters.

to Allegra, or to Miss Clairmont, is indeed pretty clear from references made, in Mrs. Shelley's reply, to "C.'s illness at Naples," and to the last letter of Elise—who, as we have seen, had been a nursemaid in Shelley's family since the time when they were sojourning near Geneva.* A sentence from his answer to Mary is worth extracting. "I do not wonder, my dearest friend, that you should have been moved. I was at first; but speedily regained the indifference which the opinion of anything and anybody, except our own consciences, amply merits, and day by day shall more receive from me." The strong expressions used in these letters should not be understood as truly misanthropic: Shelley was to the last quite free from misanthropy, properly so called.

There was a question at this time whether Switzerland or some other place should be selected for the residence of Byron and the Countess Guiccioli. At his friend's request, Shelley wrote to the lady dissuading her and her family from choosing Switzerland; and she in reply begged Shelley not to leave Ravenna without bringing Byron along with him. Shelley regarded such a request from a lady as a law; and determined therefore not to lose sight of Lord Byron for any time until he should have brought him to Pisa, which his lordship was now minded to select for his sojourn.†

At Ravenna was started, apparently by Byron,‡ the project of a quarterly review or magazine, to be the organ for the author of *Cain* and *Don Juan*, and his immediate friends, to express their not invariably well-received sentiments. Shelley conveyed the proposal to Leigh Hunt on the 26th of August; saying that Byron's suggestion was for the three to publish in this magazine all their future original compositions, and to share the profits. Shelley at first opposed Byron's scheme; and, in writing to

* The same fact becomes still clearer from another passage in Shelley's letter. "The calumny . . . is evidently the source of the violent denunciations of the *Literary Gazette*—in themselves contemptible enough, and only to be regarded as effects, which show us their cause." We turn to the *Literary Gazette* for 19th May 1821, critique of *Queen Mab;* and find Shelley (by implication) termed "an incestuous wretch"—and then farther on: "To such [a man] it would be a matter of perfect indifference to rob a confiding father of his daughters, and incestuously to live with all the branches of a family whose morals were ruined by the damned sophistry of the seducer."

† A very brief record of the opinion which La Guiccioli formed of Shelley may here be preserved. James Smith records of her conversation, not long after the death of Byron, "Bysshe Shelley she denominates a good man."

‡ Medwin, however, says that the first suggestion was made by Shelley, with a view to benefiting Leigh Hunt. This is quite conceivable; though the project, as schemed out for taking practical shape, is ascribed to Byron.

Hunt, he expressed in confidence his resolute determination not to accept either any part of the profits, or any lustre that might be reflected on himself, in popular eyes, by so close an association with Byron. Moreover he was afraid of both shackling himself and injuring the other writers by such a joint plan. He did, however, furnish some writings for the magazine, which commenced soon after his death under the name of *The Liberal* (the title first suggested was *The Hesperides*); but, even had he survived, he would have had no pecuniary interest in it.

The routine of life at Ravenna is thus described by Shelley. "Lord Byron gets up at two. I get up, quite contrary to my usual custom (but one must sleep or die, like Southey's sea-snake in *Kehama*), at twelve. After breakfast we sit talking till six. From six till eight we gallop through the pine-forests which divide Ravenna from the sea; then come home and dine; and sit up gossiping till six in the morning. I do not think this will kill me in a week or fortnight, but I shall not try it longer."

The autumn and winter of 1821–2 were spent in Pisa by both Byron and Shelley. The former inhabited the Casa Lanfranchi: Shelley and his wife were in the Tre Palazzi on the opposite side of the Lungarno.* As we have already noted, they had now plenty of society—in fact, more than enough for the poet. Daily meetings with Byron, riding, pistol-practice—at which both the poets were more than fairly good, Shelley's hand being particularly steady—cheered or diverted many hours. Shelley was not a graceful horseman, though he had had considerable practice. The Williamses were now living in their own apartments in the same house with the Shelleys. The poet had about this time a singular plan of life in his head: he wished to obtain political employment at the court of a native Indian prince, and consulted his friend Peacock, who had for some three years held an appointment in the India House, as to the feasibility of the plan. The reply was that such a post was open to none save servants of the East India Company.

About the beginning of 1822 another friend was added to this Pisan circle, and one who soon established a position of great prominence and intimacy—Captain Edward John Trelawny.

* They had been in the Casa Frassi, Lungarno, in 1820—as appears from a letter, of the 7th March in that year, addressed by Mrs. Shelley to Miss Sophia Stacey, now Mrs. Catty.

We owe to this gentleman one of the best books extant regarding the poet, whom he understood and loved at once. The genuine worshiper of Shelley will always entertain a respectful affection for Trelawny, still happily among us; not to speak of the singular interest attaching to his own career in Greece, and previously in a wandering sea-life shadowed forth with more or less accuracy in that fascinating book, *The Adventures of a Younger Son.* The first meeting with Shelley must be told in Trelawny's own words. "The Williamses received me in their earnest cordial manner. We had a great deal to communicate to each other, and were in loud and animated conversation when I was rather put out by observing in the passage near the open door, opposite to where I sat, a pair of glittering eyes steadily fixed on mine: it was too dark to make out whom they belonged to. With the acuteness of a woman, Mrs. Williams's eyes followed the direction of mine, and, going to the doorway, she laughingly said: 'Come in, Shelley; it's only our friend Tre just arrived.' Swiftly gliding in, blushing like a girl, a tall thin stripling held out both his hands: and, although I could hardly believe—as I looked at his flushed, feminine, and artless face—that it could be the poet, I returned his warm pressure. After the ordinary greetings and courtesies, he sat down and listened. I was silent from astonishment. Was it possible this mild-looking beardless boy could be the veritable monster at war with all the world?—excommunicated by the Fathers of the Church, deprived of his civil rights by the fiat of a grim Lord Chancellor, discarded by every member of his family, and denounced by the rival sages of our literature as the founder of a Satanic school? I could not believe it: it must be a hoax. He was habited like a boy, in a black jacket and trowsers which he seemed to have outgrown—or his tailor, as is the custom, had most shamefully stinted him in his 'sizings.' [The jacket was an object of some scorn to Mrs. Shelley]. Mrs. Williams saw my embarrassment, and, to relieve me, asked Shelley what book he had in his hand. —'Calderon's *Magico Prodigioso:* I am translating some passages in it.'—'Oh! read it to us!' Shoved off from the shore of commonplace incidents that could not interest him, and fairly launched on a theme that did, he instantly became oblivious of everything but the book in his hand. The masterly manner in which he analysed the genius of the author, his lucid interpretation of the story, and the ease with which he translated into

our language the most subtle and imaginative passages of the Spanish poet, were marvellous, as was his command of the two languages. After this touch of his quality, I no longer doubted his identity. A dead silence ensued. Looking up I asked, 'Where is he?'—Mrs. Williams said: 'Who? Shelley? Oh! he comes and goes like a spirit, no one knows when or where.' Presently he reappeared with Mrs. Shelley."

The translation which he was now making from Calderon was almost contemporaneous with that, still finer and more difficult, from Göthe's *Faust;* a work which he read about this time "over and over again, and always with sensations which no other composition excites: it deepens the gloom and augments the rapidity of ideas." Shelley had, however, been familiar with *Faust* for years past. Mr. Peacock says that Brockden "Brown's four novels [*Wieland, Ormond, Edgar Huntly*, and *Arthur Mervyn*], Schiller's *Robbers*, and Göthe's *Faust* [which last he began reading in 1815], were, of all the works with which he was familiar, those that took the deepest root in his mind, and had the strongest influence in the formation of his character." The translation from *Faust* appeared in the first number of the *Liberal;* both this and the Calderon translation had been done to serve as the basis of a paper which Shelley meant to write. Göthe became acquainted with the former, and expressed his hearty approbation of it.

The poet thought Trelawny noble and generous; and Mrs. Shelley soon—too soon—had reason to regard him as the only quite disinterested friend she had at hand. He it was who, at a very early date of the acquaintanceship, suggested the idea of the boat which was to prove so ill-omened. On the 15th of January he offered the model of an American schooner; but this design was over-ruled by Williams, who proposed another that he had brought from England, done by a naval friend, the reverse of perfectly safe. This Trelawny got an intimate acquaintance at Genoa, Captain Daniel Roberts, R.N., to undertake. The boat was named the *Don Juan*, and was to be the property of Shelley and Williams jointly. Captain Roberts remonstrated against the design, but could not dissuade Williams from it.

Two singular incidents, which threatened serious consequences but came to little, marked the close of Shelley's stay in Pisa.

In December he learned that a man had been condemned to be burned to death at Lucca for an act of sacrilege—the scatter-

ing of the eucharistic wafers off an altar. One less inimical than Shelley to intolerance and the modes of "Iberian priests" might well have felt some measure of indignant horror at such a sentence. He forthwith proposed to Byron and Medwin that they and himself should arm, rescue the man at all costs on his coming forth for execution, and carry him off to the Tuscan frontier. He also communicated with Lord Guilford, the English minister at Florence, and was preparing to promote a general memorial to the Grand Duke. It soon turned out, however, that the judicial atrocity was not to be perpetrated: the prisoner had had his sentence commuted to labour at the galleys.

On the 24th of March occurred a *fracas* much talked of in books relating to Lord Byron, but which must here be dismissed with brevity. Byron, Shelley, Count Pietro Gamba (brother of La Guiccioli), Captain Hay, Trelawny, and Mr. Taafe, an Irish gentleman, were riding near the gate termed Le Piagge, with the ladies following in a carriage, when a serjeant-major of hussars, named Masi, dashed through them, disconcerting Mr. Taafe, who was not a good rider. He appealed to Byron, who, along with Shelley, rode after the serjeant-major. A disturbance ensued; Masi slashed about with his sword, and made some show of ordering out the guard at the gate, to arrest the party; Byron and Gamba spurred on towards the Casa Lanfranchi. The serjeant-major now assaulted Trelawny; when Shelley interposed his body, and received a smart blow with the hilt of the sword, which knocked him off his horse, and was sufficiently severe to turn him sick. Some further incidents led up to the crowning feat—which was a stab with a pitchfork administered to the hussar by a servant of Byron or of the Gambas. The wound was of some gravity, but not mortal; Shelley spoke of the whole affair as "a trifling piece of business enough." It sufficed, however, along with some other quarrels and deeper-lying political causes, to make the government send out of Tuscany Count Pietro Gamba and his father, and hence also to abridge the stay in Pisa of Lord Byron, who moved off to Leghorn, and soon afterwards to Genoa.

XXIX.—SHELLEY AT LERICI.

On the 26th of April the Shelleys and Williamses left Pisa for the Casa Magni, a house situated on the very edge of the sea-

shore, between the villages of Lerici and Sant' Arenzo, in the Genoese territory. The poet had made a casual visit to this coast in the preceding summer, and had ever since pondered its attractions of land and sea for a residence during the hot season. The house, a white building with arches, had once been a Jesuit convent, and was perfectly lonely; the scenery was soft and sublime; the natives were semi-savages; provisions had to be fetched from Sarzana, at a distance of three miles and a half, and the general means of comfort were scanty, like the victuals. A dining-room and four bed-rooms composed the establishment, which the wives did not greatly relish, but made extremely pleasant with music, conversation, and tender domesticities. Shelley's constant habits of benevolence did not abate in this wild and half-inhabited region: wherever there was sickness in a house within his range, there would he be found, nursing and advising.*

The small schooner, the *Don Juan*, arrived on the 12th of May. Shelley and Williams retained a sailor-boy named Charles Vivian, who was expert at managing her; and her first performances filled them with satisfaction. Of course they were now continually out on the sea, and the milder pleasures of inland navigation sank into insignificance. Shelley, according to the skilled evidence of Trelawny, was extremely awkward at sea, besides having his mind continually elsewhere; Williams was not unpromising, but inexperienced. Both were far more confident than cautious, and disinclined to submit to the warnings addressed to them by Trelawny as to the great difference between the chances well out at sea and those of the land-locked bay close to their residence. It was a season of sultry heat and long drought: but this was, to Shelley, small objection or none, for he revelled in heat, and would court any amount of scorching, whether from the sun of summer abroad, or from the winter fire within-doors. There was something portentous, a kind of ominous and trance-like splendour, in the scene and the season. We hear its echoes in the *Triumph of Life;* a poem whose long processional suspense, and full-charged visionary mysticism, might seem to derive from days muttering with low thunder, and heavy with unrelaxed glare and gathering densities of

* I give this interesting fact from the statement of a friend, who stayed some little while on the spot a few years ago, and there met an old man who recollected Shelley and his ways—and this one among them.

cloud. In his boat or in some sea-cave, in oppression of sunlight or tremulous softness of moonlight, Shelley continued this astonishing poem. He had begun it in Pisa, after throwing aside the drama of *Charles the First*—an undertaking which he mentions now and again with a strong feeling of its lofty requirements, but no great personal relish for the work. Probably, among friends and acquaintances at Pisa, and with more than enough to fritter away his time, he found it difficult to concentrate his mind and hand for so grave and unaccustomed an effort. "A devil of a nut it is to crack," he said in a letter to Mr. Peacock, dated in January 1822.

Nor were portents wanting of another kind than those of sea, sky, and climate. Here are three curious stories, pertaining to the last couple of months of Shelley's life, and of which the reader may make what he pleases.

On the 6th of May Shelley and Williams were walking on the terrace of the house in a moonlight evening, when the poet grasped his companion's arm violently, and stared hard at the surf, exclaiming "There it is again—there!" He ultimately "declared that he saw, as plainly as he then saw me [Williams], a naked child rise from the sea, and clap its hands as in joy, smiling at him." This child was Allegra, who had died of fever in the Convent of Bagnacavallo on the 20th of April.

About the same time (I presume some few days later, but it is not clearly defined) he was heard screaming at midnight in the saloon. The Williamses ran in, and found him staring on vacancy. He had had a vision of a cloaked figure which came to his bedside, and beckoned him to follow. He did so; and, when they had reached the sitting-room, the figure lifted the hood of his cloak, disclosed Shelley's own features, and, saying "Siete soddisfatto," vanished. This vision is accounted for on the ground that Shelley had been reading a drama attributed to Calderon, named *El Embozado, ó El Encapotado;* in which a mysterious personage, who has been haunting and thwarting the hero all his life, and is at last about to give him satisfaction in a duel, finally unmasks, and proves to be the hero's own wraith. He also asks "Art thou satisfied?"—and the haunted man dies of horror.

On the 29th of June some friends distinctly saw Shelley walk into a little wood near Lerici, when in fact he was in quite a different direction. This was related by Byron to Mr. Cowell.

Shelley had received news on the 20th that Leigh Hunt and his family had reached Genoa. Hunt, after some deliberation, and extraordinary delays in the transit, was come to Italy to join in the project of *The Liberal.* Shelley had by this time resolved that he could not even so much as act as the link between Lord Byron and Hunt: but he at once prepared to start in the *Don Juan* to Leghorn, whither the new-comer was proceeding to meet his lordship. After his two months at Lerici, perhaps the happiest he had ever known, and marked by an interval of unusually good health, he went off to Leghorn on the 1st of July, with Williams. He was in high spirits; Mary, the state of whose health (she had recently had a miscarriage) prevented her accompanying her husband, felt uncommonly depressed, and beset by melancholy forebodings. High spirits were themselves ominous of evil to Shelley; who "had recently remarked that the only warning he had found infallible was that, whenever he felt peculiarly joyous, he was certain that some disaster was about to ensue." A wind in the north-west, we are told, no less than extreme heat, was wont to exhilarate him. The last verses which Shelley wrote, and which have not come down to us, consisted of a welcome to Leigh Hunt.

A voyage of seven hours and a half took Shelley to Leghorn, where he greeted Hunt with fervid impetuosity. He rushed into his arms, exclaiming that he was "so inexpressibly delighted—you cannot think how inexpressibly happy it makes me!" He then went on with Hunt to Pisa, where both himself and Byron retained their residences; and he saw his friends settled in their apartments in the Casa Lanfranchi, which Byron, after some friendly debates between himself and Shelley, had fitted up for the family.* Shelley accompanied Hunt about Pisa, still in high spirits, though his friend thought him less hopeful than of old.

A considerable change for the better had, however, taken place in Shelley's exterior during his residence in Italy. He had grown larger and more manly; his chest was perhaps three or four inches fuller in girth; his voice was stronger, his manner more confident and less changeful. His hair, still youthful in abundance and growth, had at a very early age (I presume as

* Some accounts say that Shelley was the paymaster: but I suppose his own statement (*Relics of Shelley*, p. 187) in a letter to Hunt must be taken as conclusive: "Lord B. had kindly insisted upon paying the upholsterer's bill."

soon as 1817, or even sooner) begun to turn grey, and this had continued, though not to a very serious extent; but his visage remained unwrinkled, and his general aspect almost boyish (as we have just seen in Trelawny's account). This, however, was very much a matter of varying expression: no face was a livelier mirror of the subtle change and play of emotion than Shelley's—and, as the feeling shifted, he might have been taken at this period for nineteen years of age, and immediately afterwards for forty. His countenance took every expression—earnest, joyful, touchingly sorrowful, listlessly weary; but the predominant aspect was one of promptitude and decision. In describing Shelley's appearance at the threshold of manhood, I said that his features were "in some sort feminine:" Trelawny has employed the same epithet; and I am told that, on one occasion while out walking with a friend in Italy, Shelley was taken for a woman in man's clothes. But this feminine aspect is liable to be understood in too positive a sense, especially by persons who accept the portraits in good faith. Mr. Thornton Hunt says that the poet was not, properly speaking, feminine-looking; his shoulders, though not broad, were too square for that, and "the outline of the features and face possessed a firmness and *hardness*, entirely inconsistent with a feminine character: the outline was sharp and firm,"—the beard not strong, but clearly marked.* The general look was delicate, but "the points" (as a grazier has it) showed far more than common masculine vigour. And this was in Shelley's character, as well as his face. With all his tremulous sensibility and superficial shyness, he possessed not only a great power of fascination, but uncommon force of will—to

* Some approach to a pair of moustachios, Trelawny informs me, had about this time been made by Shelley—but they were not much of a pair.—As regards his general appearance, I may perhaps as well give here the notes which I roughly jotted down concerning the portrait by Miss Curran (daughter of the Irish statesman) when I saw it in 1868 in the Exhibition of National Portraits at South Kensington, to which it had been contributed by Sir Percy Shelley. My notes were made at a time when the detailed statements left by biographers as to Shelley's appearance were by no means present to my memory; and, by their entire consonance with those statements so far as apparent age and complexion are concerned, may tend to confirm the accuracy of the portrait, with regard to these points at least. The work was painted in 1819, (begun on 7th May, the day after the affair at the Roman Post-Office), when Shelley's real age was twenty-seven. "Small life-size. Age about nineteen. Plain green background. Waved hair, dark or darkening brown. Complexion fair, but as if a good deal exposed to air, giving a rather coppery-red hue. Eyes quite a dark blue. Mouth *entrouvert*, with a kind of curl of aspiration and apprehending. Open shirt, blue coat. Quill in hand; left not seen. Gives a decided impression of a poet, and the bad qualities of the picture are not of an offensive kind. Flat broad painting, very slight but not thin."—I am told that the late distinguished painter Mulready knew Shelley well, and said it was simply impossible to paint his portrait—he was "too beautiful."

which, indeed, the tenour of his life bears amplest testimony. All who approached him tended to yield to his dictate: "his earnestness was apt to take a tone of command so generous, so free, so simple, as to be utterly devoid of offence, and yet to constitute him a sort of tyrant over all who came within his reach."

Whatever may have been his mood of the moment, whether "in high spirits" or "less hopeful than of old," Shelley took anything but a cheerful view of the prospects of Leigh Hunt in connexion with Lord Byron; and some effort was needed to control his own indignation at the shiftiness of his lordship. The latter had determined to leave Tuscany in consequence of the exile of the Gambas, and showed little disposition to fashion his plans according to the necessities or conveniences of Hunt with regard to the proposed magazine: moreover Mrs. Hunt, long in bad health, was pronounced by Vaccà to be hopelessly consumptive (although in fact she survived to an advanced age).

Two letters dated the 4th of July, one to Mrs. Shelley and the other to Mrs. Williams, are the last lines of writing extant from the hand of Shelley, and prove how acutely he felt for the distresses and uncertainties of his newly arrived friends. The reply of Mrs. Williams, written on the 6th, is also extant, and has been shown to me by Trelawny. It contains a farther singular foreboding: a reference—playful at the moment, but immediately turned into tragic—to Shelley's being about to join Plato in another world. In the poet's own letter to his wife the final words are—"I have found the translation of the *Symposium*," which, we may suppose, he was looking up, for insertion in the *Liberal*. He himself was indeed bidden to another symposium—one which endures through eternity, at which Socrates is a guest once more, with Plato, Dante, Shakspeare, Bacon, and how many others beloved by Shelley, none more exalted than he, none crowned with a purer or more perennial garland.

XXX.—DEATH AND OBSEQUIES.

Shelley left Pisa on the night of the 4th of July for Leghorn: where he chiefly remained the next three days, though he was in Pisa again on the 6th and 7th. On this latter day, the last whose evening he was to witness, he said to Mrs. Leigh Hunt: "If I die to-morrow, I have lived to be older than my father; I am ninety years of age." Williams at Leghorn was homesick,

short as his absence had been; Shelley troubled, and anxious to return in consequence of a desponding letter he had received from his wife. On Monday the 8th, about 3 P.M., they set sail from Leghorn for Lerici, taking leave of Trelawny, who was in charge of Byron's yacht, the *Bolivar*, and who, by a fatality, was prevented from accompanying them owing to the want of a port-clearance, and the consequent prospect of the full term of quarantine. Captain Roberts watched with his glass, from the top of Leghorn light-house, the progress of Shelley and Williams along the waves.

The day was terribly hot, with a dull dense calmness; clouds were gathering from the south-west, black and ragged. The Genoese mate of the *Bolivar* remarked too truly to Trelawny that "the devil was brewing mischief." A sea-fog came up, and wrapped the boat from sight.

"I went down into the cabin," says Trelawny, "and sank into a slumber. I was roused up by a noise overhead, and went on deck. . . . . It was almost dark, though only half-past six o'clock. The sea was of the colour, and looked as solid and smooth as a sheet of lead, and covered with an oily scum. Gusts of wind swept over without ruffling it; and big drops of rain fell on its surface, rebounding as if they could not penetrate it. There was a commotion in the air, made up of many threatening sounds coming upon us from the sea. Fishing-craft and coasting vessels under bare poles rushed by us in shoals, running foul of the ships in the harbour. As yet the din and hubbub was that made by men; but their shrill pipings were suddenly silenced by the crashing voice of a thunder-squall that burst right over our heads. For some time no other sounds were to be heard than the thunder, wind, and rain. When the fury of the storm, which did not last for more than twenty minutes, had abated, and the horizon was in some degree cleared, I looked to seaward anxiously, in the hope of descrying Shelley's boat amongst the many small craft scattered about." No trace of her was to be seen: she had made Via Reggio by the time the storm burst.

Days ensued of horrible suspense to the wives—alas! the widows—of Shelley and Williams, and of harrowing search and unremitted exertion to Trelawny. These need not now be dwelt upon. On the 22nd of July two corpses were found washed ashore; that of Shelley near Via Reggio on the Tuscan

coast—that of Williams near the tower of Migliarino, at the Bocca Lericcio, a distance of three miles. This corpse was in a piteous state: of Shelley's "the face and hands, and parts of the body not protected by the dress, were fleshless." A volume of Sophocles was in one pocket: Keats's last book, lent to him by Hunt, and doubled back at the *Eve of St Agnes*, was in the other, as if hastily thrust away when Shelley, absorbed in reading, was suddenly aroused by the bursting squall. Williams had seemingly attempted to swim: Shelley, being unable to do this, had more than once declared that, in any such contingency, he would be no trouble to anybody, but go down at once. It was only a few months before that the poet, inspirited by witnessing Trelawny's ease in swimming, had made a disastrous attempt for himself, and would then have drowned but for his companion's succour: he took it with the utmost coolness, saying—"It 's a great temptation; if old women's tales are true, in another minute I might have been in another planet." Three weeks later than Shelley and Williams, the sailor-boy Charles Vivian, then a mere skeleton, was also thrown ashore, about four miles off. In September the schooner likewise was found: she had not capsized, but had been swamped in a heavy sea, and sunk in ten to fifteen fathom water; or possibly she had been run down by a felucca from behind. The boat was considerably injured,* especially by a hole in the stern. This it was found somewhat difficult to account for; and a suspicion has been started that some native boat may have tried to board her piratically, tempted by a sum of money in dollars that was on the *Don Juan*. Immediately after the storm, an English-made oar, believed to have belonged to the yacht, was noticed in a fishing-boat; but the crew resolutely denied that it came from that vessel, and the denial, even if untrue, might be accounted for on the ground of the sternness of Italian quarantine regulations. Nothing therefore beyond suspicion points to any foul play.

The corpses were in the first instance buried in the sand, and quick-lime was thrown in. But such a process, as a final means of disposing of them, would have been contrary to the Tuscan law, which required any object thus cast ashore to be

* "Uninjured," says Mrs. Shelley (vol. ii. p. 295). But the precise details given by Lady Shelley, from the examination made by Captain Roberts, show this to be a mistake (*Shelley Memorials*, p. 201).

burned,* as a precaution against plague; and Trelawny, seconded by Mr Dawkins, the English Consul at Florence, obtained permission to superintend the burning, and carry it out in a manner consonant to the feelings of the survivors. This process was executed with the body of Williams on the 15th of August, —on the 16th with Shelley's. A furnace was provided, of iron bars and strong sheet iron, with fuel, and frankincense, wine, salt, and oil, the accompaniments of a Grecian cremation: the volume of Keats was burned along with the body.† Byron and Leigh Hunt, with the Health-Officer, and a guard of soldiers, attended the poet's obsequies. It was a glorious day, and a splendid prospect—the cruel and calm sea before, the Apennines behind. A curlew wheeled close to the pyre, screaming, and would not be driven away: the flame arose golden and towering. The corpse had now turned a dark indigo colour. "The only portions that were not consumed," says Trelawny, "were some fragments of bones, the jaw, and the skull; but what surprised us all was that the heart remained entire. In snatching this relic from the fiery furnace, my hand was severely burnt." The ashes were coffered, and soon afterwards buried in the Protestant Cemetery in Rome. This was done at first under the direction of Consul Freeborn, and with the usual rites, for the authorities were urgent for immediate action: but Trelawny, shortly visiting the spot, found that Shelley's grave lay amid many others,—so he exhumed the ashes, and redeposited them, with no further consultation of the authorities, in a plot of ground selected and purchased by himself. He planted six young cypresses and four laurels by Shelley's grave, and had his own dug close beside, with a stone which remains (and long may it remain) uninscribed. He added the quotation from

* This is distinctly stated both by Mrs. Shelley and by Lady Shelley. Yet Trelawny shows quite as clearly that the burning of the bodies was only allowed after some solicitation, and was "an unprecedented proceeding." We are to understand that summary burning, as for instance in a lime-kiln, would have been the ordinary Italian plan; and that the "unprecedented" thing was the removal of the once hastily interred bodies, the ceremonial cremation after the classic pattern, and the delivery of the ashes to the surviving relatives.

† Captain Trelawny has no recollection of this detail; and he of course is *the* authority for all matters connected with the cremation. Still, it seems difficult to disregard the statement in the *Shelley Memorials* (p. 200), probably derived from Leigh Hunt: "The copy of Keats was lent by Leigh Hunt, who told Shelley to keep it till he could give it to him again with his own hands. As the lender would receive it from no one else, it was burnt with the body." A letter from Mr. Browning (Hunt's *Correspondence*, vol. ii. p. 266) also makes it plain that Hunt did give this account of the matter.

Shakspeare to the inscription upon Shelley's grave, which runs exactly as follows :—

PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY
COR CORDIUM
NATUS IV AUG. MDCCXCII
OBIIT VIII JUL. MDCCCXXII.

"Nothing of him that doth fade
But doth suffer a sea-change
Into something rich and strange."

Though buried in the Protestant Cemetery, Shelley is not strictly in the same enclosed ground with his son William and Keats, but in a space immediately adjoining. He is in the *new* cemetery, they are in the *old* one. Further burials in the old cemetery were discontinued about this period, because the College of Fine Arts in Rome objected (and reasonably) that the frequent planting of cypresses and other trees in that enclosure would obscure the view of the pyramid of Caius Cestius.

I will here only add that Mary Shelley returned to England (whither she had been preceded by Mrs. Williams) in the autumn of 1823, died in February 1851, and is interred at Bournemouth. Not far off, at Christchurch, her son has erected a sumptuous monument to her and his illustrious father's memory. His own seat, Boscombe, is in the same vicinity. This son, Percy Florence, succeeded to the baronetcy on the death of Sir Timothy in April 1844. Godwin had died in 1836.

XXXI.—ANECDOTES AND EXCERPTS.

I find myself little inclined or qualified to dilate at this point upon Shelley's character and genius, or upon the loss which the world and English literature suffered in his death. If his writings do not speak for themselves to the reader's intellect and heart, and if the record of so lofty, beautiful, and pure a life—one so steeped in every noblest enthusiasm, and developing into every noblest performance—is not sufficient, the biographer may well despair of supplementing these. I at any rate feel an oppressive sense of incompetence, of the meagreness and futility of verbal estimate, as I stand within the mighty shadow, and reflect what terms might be wanted to express it. Reverence and love, and a passionate tribute of admiration, may best beseem the biographer:

and these are not the qualities which find their most apt expression in analytic words—rather in silence and absorption of spirit.

As regards the poems, the only observation I wish to add here is that their astonishing beauty of musical sound—admitted on all hands as one of their quite exceptional excellences—is combined with, perhaps partly dependent on, an indifference, uncommon in degree among finished poetical writers, to mere *correctness* of rhyming structure. The precise attention I have had to bestow on this point has brought the fact very forcibly before me—has revealed a looseness of rhyming very much greater than I had before observed in my less technical readings of Shelley. Now, as Shelley himself opined, "the canons of taste are to be sought in the most admirable works of art;" and the combination, in his poems, of inexactitude of rhyming with almost unrivalled music of sound, impresses it strongly upon my mind that this may after all be the *right way* to attain the highest forms of verbal harmony in poetry—of course, given the true and great master. I will not enlarge upon the point; but simply append a list of loose rhymes to be found upon five pages taken absolutely at random; a list selected with a purpose would exhibit a still stronger case:—"Lot, thought—alone, shone—afar, war—stood, flood—evil, revel—strong, among—none, groan—drove, love—sinecure, fewer—count, front, account—require, Oliver—off, enough—down, one—promotion, motion—amid, pyramid—floors, alligators—river, ever, wheresoever—harmony, sky—thee, thee (twice over)—low, how—fail (rhymeless)—despair, dear—accept not, reject not."

It will, I think, be more to the purpose of a true presentation of Shelley's character if, instead of perorating upon it, I cite here a few out of the many illustrative anecdotes; and these I shall cull with the sole object of such illustration, and in the words (mostly condensed) of the narrators—careless whether the impression produced by them be grave or mirthful: I will also add two estimates of Shelley's genius given by pre-eminent living poets, and of enduring value when the mere exercitations of critics shall have vanished from record. Shelley's personality was especially self-consistent—a solid rock of native genuineness, giving forth varied but not inharmonious manifestations. No one ought to be surprised at singularities, oddities, or semi-absurdities, in these phases of character; and anybody whose sympathy is with *men*, and not with such substitutes as

"humanity," the "poet soul," or the like cheap abstractions, will feel the greatness in Shelley even more conceivable, instead of less so, when he has thoroughly explored the by-ways of his nature. The little that Mrs. Shelley has written concerning her husband shows a love and admiration of his personal character of which only a small part should be set down to the score of conjugal affection; and the unconventional nature of Trelawny, oscillating between violence and romance, seems to have entered into Shelley's more sympathetically than that of any other biographer. To Hogg and Peacock, valuable as were their acumen and opportunities, Mr. Thornton Hunt demurs as writers of Shelley's life in any complete sense; and his remark on his father in the same capacity appears to me particularly right. Leigh Hunt "was scarcely suited to comprehend the strong instincts, indomitable will, and complete unity of idea, which distinguished Shelley: accordingly we have from my father a very doubtful portrait, seldom advancing beyond details which are at once exaggerated and explained away by qualifications."—I now proceed to the anecdotes, to which I append the names of the several narrators, and the date, actual or approximate, to which the circumstances pertain. The flavour of an anecdote is very volatile, and seldom uninjured by transfer into a different vehicle of words.

Shelley in boyhood "had a wish to educate some child, and often talked seriously of purchasing a little girl for that purpose. A tumbler who came to the back door to display her wonderful feats attracted him, and he thought she would be a good subject for the purpose: but all these wild fancies came to nought. He did not consider that board and lodging would be indispensable." (Miss Shelley, *circa* 1807).

"If mercy to beasts be a criterion of a good man, numerous instances of extreme tenderness would demonstrate his worth. We were walking one afternoon in Bagley Wood: on turning a corner, we suddenly came upon a boy who was driving an ass. It was very young and very weak, and was staggering beneath a most disproportionate load of faggots; and he was belabouring its lean ribs angrily and violently with a short, thick, heavy cudgel. At the sight of cruelty Shelley was instantly transported far beyond the usual measure of excitement: he sprang forward, and was about to interpose with energetic and indignant vehemence. I caught him by the arm, and to his present

annoyance held him back, and with much difficulty persuaded him to allow me to be the advocate of the dumb animal. [Ensues a dialogue between Hogg and the boy, in which the latter is put to shame]. Shelley was satisfied with the result of our conversation. Although he reluctantly admitted that the acrimony of humanity might often aggravate the sufferings of the oppressed by provoking the oppressor, I always observed that the impulse of generous indignation, on witnessing the infliction of pain, was too vivid to allow him to pause." (Hogg, *circa* 1810). —"I wish you to look out for a home for me and Mary and William, and the kitten who is now *en pension*." (Shelley, from Mont Alègre, to Peacock in England, 1816).—"The Grotta del Cane we saw, because other people see it; but would not allow the dog to be exhibited in torture, for our curiosity. The poor little animals stood moving their tails in a slow and dismal manner, as if perfectly resigned to their condition—a cur-like emblem of voluntary servitude. The effect of the vapour, which extinguishes a torch, is to cause suffocation at last." (Shelley, 1819).

"It now seems an incredible thing, and altogether inconceivable, when I consider the gravity of Shelley, and his invincible repugnance to the comic, that the monkey tricks of the schoolboy could have still lingered; but it is certain that some slight vestiges still remained. The metaphysician of eighteen actually attempted once or twice to electrify the son of his scout—a boy like a sheep, by name James; who roared aloud with ludicrous and stupid terror whenever Shelley affected to bring by stealth any part of his philosophical apparatus near to him." (Hogg, *circa* 1810).—It may be imagined that Shelley was of a melancholy cast of mind. On the contrary, he was naturally full of playfulness, and remarkable for the *fine*ness of his ideas; and I have never met any one in whom the brilliance of wit and humour was more conspicuous. In this respect he fell little short of Byron; and perhaps it was one of the great reasons why Byron found such a peculiar charm in his conversation." (Medwin, *circa* 1821).—"Shelley, like other students, would, when the spell that bound his faculties was broken, shut his books, and indulge in the wildest flights of mirth and folly. We talked and laughed, and shrieked and shouted, as we emerged from under the shadows of the melancholy pines. The old man I had met in the morning gathering pine-cones

passed hurriedly by with his donkey, giving Shelley a wide berth, and evidently thinking that the melancholy Englishman had now become a raving maniac." (Trelawny, 1822).

"With how unconquerable an aversion do I shrink from political articles in newspapers and reviews! I have heard people talk politics by the hour, and how I hated it and them! I went with my father several times to the House of Commons, and what creatures did I see there! What faces! what an expression of countenance! what wretched beings!" (Shelley, as reported by Hogg, *circa* 1811).—"A newspaper never found its way to his rooms the whole period of his residence at Oxford; but, when waiting in a bookseller's shop, or at an inn, he would sometimes, although rarely, permit his eye to be attracted by a murder or a storm. If it chanced to stray to a political article, after reading a few lines he invariably threw it aside to a great distance; and he started from his seat, his face flushing, and strode about muttering broken sentences, the purport of which was always the same—his extreme dissatisfaction at the want of candour and fairness and the monstrous disingenuousness which politicians manifest in speaking of the characters and measures of their rivals." (Hogg, *circa* 1811).—"Never have I seen him read a newspaper." (Medwin, *circa* 1821).

"I was about to enter Covent Garden when an Irish labourer whom I met, bearing an empty hod, accosted me somewhat roughly, and asked why I had run against him: I told him briefly that he was mistaken. He discoursed for some time with the vehemence of a man who considers himself injured or insulted; and he concluded, being emboldened by my long silence, with a cordial invitation just to push him again. Several persons not very unlike in costume had gathered round him, and appeared to regard him with sympathy. When he paused, I addressed to him slowly and quietly, and (it should seem) with great gravity, these words, as nearly as I can recollect them: 'I have put my hand into the hamper, I have looked upon the sacred barley, I have eaten out of the drum, I have drunk and was well pleased; I have said κὸγξ ὀμπαξ, and it is finished.'—'Have you, sir?' enquired the astonished Irishman; and his ragged friends instantly pressed round him with—'Where is the hamper, Paddy?' 'What barley?' and the like. I turned therefore to the right, leaving the astounded neophyte, whom I had thus planted, to expound the mystic words of initiation as

he could to his inquisitive companions. I marvelled at the ingenuity of Orpheus—if he were indeed the inventor of the Eleusinian mysteries—that he was able to devise words that (imperfectly as I had repeated them, and in the tattered fragment that has reached us) were able to soothe people so savage and barbarous. 'Κὸογξ ὄμπαξ, and it is finished!' exclaimed Shelley, crowing with enthusiastic delight at my whimsical adventure [afterwards narrated to him]. A thousand times, as he strode about the house, and in his rambles out of doors, would he stop, and repeat aloud the mystic words of initiation; but always with an energy of manner, and a vehemence of tone and of gesture, that would have prevented the ready acceptance which a calm passionless delivery had once procured for them. How often would he throw down his book, clasp his hands, and, starting from his seat, cry suddenly with a thrilling voice, 'I have said *κὸγξ ὄμπαξ*, and it is finished!'" (Hogg, *circa* 1811).

"To be always in a hurry was Bysshe's grand and first rule of conduct. His second canon of practical wisdom—and this he esteemed hardly less important than the former—was to make a mystery of everything, to treat as a profound secret matters manifest, patent, and fully known to everybody. A lively fancy, which imagined difficulties and created obstacles where none existed, was the true cause of a course of dealing that was troublesome and injurious to himself, and to all connected with him." (Hogg, *circa* 1811).

"I am determined to apply myself to a study that is hateful and disgusting to my very soul, but which is above all other studies necessary for him who would be listened to as a mender of antiquated abuses—I mean that record of crimes and miseries, history." (Shelley, 1812).—"I am unfortunately little skilled in English history; and the interest which it excites in me is so feeble that I find it a duty to attain merely to that general knowledge of it which is indispensable." (Ditto, 1818).

"He took strange caprices, unfounded frights and dislikes, vain apprehensions and panic terrors, and therefore he absented himself from formal and sacred engagements. He was unconscious and oblivious of times, places, persons, and seasons. When he was caught, the king of beauty and fancy would too commonly bolt. His flight from society was usually surreptitious and stealthy; but I have observed him to start up hastily, to declare publicly that his presence was imperatively required

elsewhere on matters of moment, and to retreat with as much noise and circumstance as an army breaking up its camp." (Hogg, *circa* 1813).—"Amongst the persons who called on him at Bishopgate was one whom he tried hard to get rid of, but who forced himself on him in every possible manner. He saw him at a distance one day as he was walking down Egham Hill; and instantly jumped through a hedge, ran across a field, and laid himself down in a dry ditch. Some men and women who were haymaking in the field ran up to see what was the matter, when he said to them: 'Go away, go away! Don't you see it's a bailiff?' On which they left him, and he escaped discovery." (Peacock, *circa* 1815).—"One morning I was in Mrs. Williams's drawing-room. Shelley stood before us with a most woful expression. 'Mary says she will have a party! There are English singers here, the Sinclairs; and she will ask them, and every one she or you know—oh the horror! For pity go to Mary, and intercede for me. I will submit to any other species of torture than that of being bored to death by idle ladies and gentlemen.' After various devices, it was resolved that Ned Williams should wait upon the lady, and see what he could do to avert the threatened invasion of the poet's solitude. Ned returned with a grave face. 'The lady,' commenced Ned, 'has set her heart on having a party, and will not be baulked.' But, seeing the poet's despair, he added: 'It is to be limited to those here assembled, and some of Count Gamba's family; and, instead of a musical feast—as we have no souls—we are to have a dinner.' The poet hopped off rejoicing; making a noise that I should have thought whistling, but that he was ignorant of that accomplishment. Shelley in society, not thinking of himself, was as much at ease as in his own home; omitting no occasion of obliging those whom he came in contact with, readily conversing with all or any who addressed him, irrespective of age or rank, dress or address." (Trelawny, 1822).

"My greatest content would be utterly to desert all human society. I would retire with you and our child to a solitary island in the sea; would build a boat; and shut upon my retreat the floodgates of the world. I would read no reviews, and talk with no authors. If I dared trust my imagination, it would tell me that there are one or two chosen companions beside yourself whom I should desire. But to this I would not listen: where two or three are gathered together, the devil is among

them. And good far more than evil impulses, love far more than hatred, has been to me, except as you have been its object, the source of all sorts of mischief. So on this plan I would be alone; and would devote either to oblivion or to future generations the overflowings of a mind which, timely withdrawn from the contagion, should be kept fit for no baser object. The other side of the alternative (for a medium ought not to be adopted) is to form for ourselves a society of our own class, as much as possible, in intellect or in feelings; and to connect ourselves with the interests of that society. Our roots never struck so deeply as at Pisa." (Shelley to his wife, 1821).

"I knew Shelley more intimately than any man, but I never could discern in him any more than two fixed principles. The first was a strong irrepressible love of liberty; of liberty in the abstract, and somewhat after the pattern of the ancient republics, without reference to the English constitution—respecting which he knew little and cared nothing, heeding it not at all. The second was an equally ardent love of toleration of all opinions, but more especially of religious opinions—of toleration, complete, entire, universal, unlimited; and as a deduction and corollary from which latter principle he felt an intense abhorrence of persecution of every kind, public or private." (Hogg, *circa* 1814).

"He was one day going to town with me in the Hampstead stage when our only companion was an old lady, who sat silent and still after the English fashion. Shelley was fond of quoting a passage from *Richard the Second*, in the commencement of which the king, in the indulgence of his misery, exclaims,

> 'For heaven's sake, let us sit upon the ground,
> And tell sad stories of the death of kings.'

Shelley, who had been moved into the ebullition by something objectionable which he thought he saw in the face of our companion, startled her into a look of the most ludicrous astonishment by suddenly calling this passage to mind, and, in his enthusiastic tone of voice, addressing me by name with the first two lines. 'Hunt,' he exclaimed,

> 'For heaven's sake, let us sit upon the ground,
> And tell sad stories of the death of kings.'

The old lady looked on the coach-floor, as if expecting to see us take our seats accordingly."* (Leigh Hunt, 1817).

* The reader who wishes to judge whether some of Hogg's anecdotes should not be taken *cum grano salis*, may compare this temperate and authentic version of the matter with that in Hogg's *Life*, vol. ii. pp. 304-7.

"Shelley, in coming to our house that night, had found a woman lying near the top of the hill, in fits. It was a fierce winter night, with snow upon the ground; and winter loses nothing of its fierceness at Hampstead. My friend, always the promptest as well as most pitying on these occasions, knocked at the first house he could reach, in order to have the woman taken in. The invariable answer was that they could not do it. Time flies; the poor woman is in convulsions—her son, a young man, lamenting over her. At last my friend sees a carriage driving up to a house at a little distance. He plants himself in the way of an elderly person, who is stepping out of the carriage with his family. He tells his story: they only press on the faster. 'Will you go and see her?' 'No, sir; there's no necessity for that sort of thing, depend on it. Impostors swarm everywhere: the thing cannot be done. Sir, your conduct is extraordinary.' 'Sir,' cried Shelley, assuming a very different manner, and forcing the flourishing householder to stop out of astonishment, 'I am sorry to say that *your* conduct is *not* extraordinary; and, if my own seems to amaze you, I will tell you something which may amaze you a little more, and I hope will frighten you. It is such men as you who madden the spirits and the patience of the poor and wretched; and, if ever a convulsion comes in this country (which is very probable), recollect what I tell you:—You will have your house, that you refuse to put the miserable woman into, burnt over your head!' 'God bless me, sir! Dear me, sir!' exclaimed the poor frightened man, and fluttered into his mansion. The woman was then brought to our house, which was at some distance, and down a bleak path (it was in the Vale of Health);* and Shelley and her son were obliged to hold her till the doctor could arrive." (Leigh Hunt, *circa* 1817).

"When Shelley was staying in the villa of the Gisbornes, a most droll incident occurred. It appears that the servants, Giuseppe and Annunziata, who were man and wife, had been left behind with the Shelleys. One evening there had sprung up a thorough conjugal tempest; and Shelley, hearing Giuseppe abusing his wife very savagely, and also ill-using her, rushed upon him with a pistol, shouting, 'I'll shoot you, I'll shoot you!' The startled fellow ran for his very life, Shelley

* Mr. Thornton Hunt believes that Shelley carried the woman on his back for some way down the Vale of Health, her son's strength having begun to fail him.

after him; till the former, coming to a shrubbery of laurels, managed to slip under them. Shelley in his eagerness darting past him, he in a few minutes found it possible to dodge back into the house unperceived. Shelley, seeing him no more, at last went back to the house; where, to his unspeakable amaze, he found Giuseppe and Annunziata sitting together in the most amicable manner, addressing each other as 'Caro' and 'Carissima.' 'But were you not quarrelling even now?' exclaimed the perplexed poet. 'No, signor, we never quarrelled.' 'But I have been running after you in order to shoot you!' 'No, signor, you never ran after me, for I have been sitting here for the last hour or more. You must have fancied all this.' And—Giuseppe and Annunziata (who had both been considerably frightened) continuing to assure him that they had had no quarrel, and Mary Shelley, whom they had let into the secret, saying the same—Shelley was at last utterly mystified, and half inclined himself to believe that he must have fancied it." (Miss Mathilde Blind, 1820).*

"He had never read *Wilhelm Meister*, but I have heard him say that he regulated his conduct towards his friends by a maxim which I found afterwards in the pages of Göthe: 'When we take people merely as they are, we make them worse; when we treat them as if they were what they should be, we improve them as far as they can be improved.'" (Mrs. Shelley, *circa* 1820).

"Ready as Shelley always was with his purse or person to assist others, his purse had a limit, but his mental wealth seemed to have none; for not only to Byron, but to any one disposed to try his hand at literature, Shelley was ever ready to give any amount of mental labour." (Trelawny, 1822).

"The unmistakeable quality of the verse would be evidence enough, under usual circumstances, not only of the kind and degree of the intellectual but of the moral constitution of Shelley; the whole personality of the poet shining forward from the poems, without much need of going further to seek it. The

* This amusing anecdote has not hitherto been in print, and is therefore all the more worthy of preservation here. Miss Blind, who has kindly imparted it to me (along with one or two other particulars), received it from a lady connected with the Gisborne family, whose informants were the servants themselves. The anecdote is of much value as illustrating the poet's haziness of mind in matters of fact—thus tending to show how readily he may sometimes, without meaning to deceive, have fancied things, and related them as realities.

*Remains**—produced within a period of ten years, and at a season of life when other men of at all comparable genius have hardly done more than prepare the eye for future sight, and the tongue for speech—present us with the complete enginery of a poet, as signal in the excellence of its several adaptitudes as transcendent in the combination of effects :—examples, in fact, of the whole poet's function of beholding with an understanding keenness the universe, nature and man, in their actual state of perfection in imperfection,—of the whole poet's virtue of being untempted, by the manifold partial developments of beauty and good on every side, into leaving them the ultimates he found them, induced by the facility of the gratification of his own sense of those qualities, or by the pleasure of acquiescence in the shortcomings of his predecessors in art, and the pain of disturbing their conventionalisms. 'The whole poet's virtue,' I repeat, of looking higher than any manifestation yet made of both beauty and good, in order to suggest, from the utmost actual realization of the one, a corresponding capability in the other, and, out of the calm, purity, and energy, of nature, to reconstitute and store up, for the forthcoming stage of man's Being, a gift in repayment of that former gift, in which man's own thought and passion had been lavished by the poet on the else-incompleted magnificence of the sunrise, the else-uninterpreted mystery of the lake; so drawing out, lifting up, and assimilating, this ideal of a future man, thus descried as possible, to the present reality of the poet's soul, already arrived at the higher state of development, and still aspirant to elevate and extend itself in conformity with its self-improving perceptions of, no longer the eventual Human, but the actual Divine. In conjunction with which noble and rare powers came the subordinate power of delivering these attained results to the world in an embodiment of verse more closely answering to and indicative of the process of the informing spirit (failing as it occasionally does in art, only to succeed in highest art), with a diction more adequate to the task, in its natural and acquired richness, its material colour, and spiritual transparency, (the whole being moved by and suffused with a music at once of the soul and the sense, expressive both of an external might of sin-

* This term includes of course the entire poetical works of Shelley, and is not limited to the *Posthumous Poems* (comprising *Julian and Maddalo, The Witch of Atlas*, and a number of minor compositions).

cere passion, and an internal fitness and consonancy) than can be attributed to any other writer whose record is among us. . . . I pass from Shelley's minor excellences to his noblest and predominating characteristic. This I call his simultaneous perception of Power and Love in the absolute, and of Beauty and Good in the concrete; while he throws, from his poet's station between both, swifter, subtler, and more numerous films, for the connexion of each with each, than have been thrown by any modern artificer of whom I have knowledge,—proving how (as he says)

> 'The spirit of the worm beneath the sod
> In love and worship blends itself with God.'

I would rather consider Shelley's poetry as a sublime fragmentary essay towards a presentment of the correspondency of the universe to Deity, of the natural to the spiritual, and of the actual to the ideal, than I would isolate and separately appraise the worth of many detachable portions which might be acknowledged as utterly perfect in a lower moral point of view, under the mere conditions of art." (Browning, 1851).

"Shelley outsang all poets on record but some two or three throughout all time: his depths and heights of inner and outer music are as divine as Nature's, and not sooner exhaustible. He was the perfect singing-god; his thoughts, words, deeds, all sang together. . . . . I do not think that justice has yet been done to Shelley, as to some among his peers, in all details and from every side. . . . . The *Lines written among the Euganean Hills* [are] no piece of spiritual sculpture, or painting-after-the-life of natural things. I do not pretend to assign it a higher or a lower place: I say simply that its place is not the same. It is a rhapsody of thought and feeling coloured by contact with Nature, but not born of the contact; and such as it is all Shelley's work is, even when most vague and vast in its elemental scope of labour and of aim. A soul as great as the world lays hold on the things of the world; on all life of plants and beasts and men—on all likeness of time and death, and good things and evil. His aim is rather to render the effect of a thing than a thing itself; the soul and spirit of life rather than the living form, the growth rather than the thing grown. And herein he is unapproachable. . . . . If Shelley had lived, *The Cenci* would not now be the one great play, written in the great manner of Shakspeare's men,

that our literature has seen since the time of these. The proof of power is here as sure and as clear as in Shelley's lyric work: he has shown himself, what the dramatist must needs be, as able to face the light of hell as of heaven, to handle the fires of evil as to brighten the beauties of things. This latter work, indeed, he preferred, and wrought at it with all the grace and force of thought and word which give to all his lyrics the light of a divine life; but his tragic truth and excellence are as certain and absolute as the sweetness and the glory of his songs. The mark of his hand, the trick of his voice, we can always recognize in their clear character and individual charm; but the range is various, from the starry and heavenly heights to the tender and flowering fields of the world, wherein he is god and lord. . . . The master singer of our modern race and age; the poet beloved above all other poets, being beyond all other poets—in one word, and the only proper word—divine." (Swinburne, 1869).

XXXII.—SHELLEY'S OPINIONS.

It will be proper here to give a slight but not indefinite glance at Shelley's opinions. I shall confine myself to three principal topics—1, the Existence or Nature of a Deity; 2, the Immortality of the Soul: and 3, Political Institutions. The reader will no doubt understand that I here enter into no controversy, and side with no disputant. To show that Shelley was right or wrong theoretically—still less so morally—wrong in being an atheist if he was one, or right in being a theist if he was that—is no part of my function: I have no sort of wish to "make him out" either one or the other, but solely to trace which of the two he was. Personally, my firm conviction is that he was entitled to hold his own speculative opinion, whatever it may have been: and so I leave this aspect of the question.

Shelley, dying before he had completed thirty years of age, was no doubt not at the end of his intellectual or speculative tether. What he might have become it is of course impossible to ascertain; what he had been in very early youth is now of next to no consequence; what he had attained to by the close of his life is the thing which it imports us to know. I shall therefore take as my starting-point the latest, and not the earliest, indications that I can find, and trace backwards from that point with lessening particularity; only premising that, in chronological sequence, he was mainly an adherent of the sceptical system in

his incipient manhood, or about the time of his studentship at Oxford, afterwards of French materialism, as in the notes to *Queen Mab*, and subsequently of the Berkeleyan or Immaterial Philosophy. He became acquainted with Berkeley's writings at the instance of Southey, towards the beginning of 1812; and they continued to germinate increasingly in his mind from two or three years later. When he wrote the *Mont Blanc* in 1816, he was obviously more of an Immaterialist than a Materialist; and so with the *Ode to Heaven* (1819), *Sensitive Plant* (1820), and other writings.

1. *The Existence or Nature of a Deity.* A Berkeleyan believes* that it is impossible to prove the existence of matter as anything else than a perception of the mind, *because* it is impossible to prove that the perception in question may not be communicated to the mind by an immediate operation of Deity, without the intervention of any actual matter. He further believes that matter can not only not be proved to exist, but *can* be proved not to exist. Thus, from the first of these two beliefs, a thorough Berkeleyan *cannot* be an atheist, for the argument itself presupposes a Deity. But it is conceivable that Shelley was not a thorough Berkeleyan: he may, as an Immaterialist, have stopped short at the nature of the human mind; and may have thought that the perceptions of that mind, without either any operation of Deity thereon, or any actual matter, are our sole informants and criteria of phænomena. It therefore still remains to enquire whether or not Shelley became eventually a theist, and in what sense.

The latest indication I find on this subject is a dialogue between Shelley and Trelawny, related by the latter, and belonging probably to the Spring of 1822. Shelley is replying to Trelawny's enquiry "Why do you call yourself an atheist?" and says: "I used it [the name atheist] to express my abhorrence of superstition: I took up the word, as a knight took up a gauntlet, in defiance of injustice." There is not much to be made out of this. If reported with verbatim accuracy, it implies that Shelley in 1822 was still wont to call himself an atheist; and also that, from first to last, the term had been used for the purpose, not solely of definition, but partly of defiance.

* I put these abstruse matters without any pretence to philosophical accuracy. If the reader well versed in metaphysics perceives them to be badly put, he perceives no more than I am quite prepared to learn.

In the year 1821 we meet with two phrases* which, taken on their own showing, would indicate belief in a God. In *Adonais* (vol. ii. p. 98)—

> "A quickening life from the Earth's heart has burst,
> As it has ever done, with change and motion,
> From the great morning of the world when first
> God dawned on chaos."

In *The Boat on the Serchio* (vol. ii., p. 359)—

> "All rose to do the task He set to each
> Who shaped us to his ends and not our own.
> The million rose to learn, and one to teach
> What none yet ever knew nor can be known."

Of these phrases, the first certainly does not count for much: it may have little beyond a rhetorical or figurative significance, although properly it is an assertion of creative—or at any rate regulative—Deity. The second is more important. The poem is strictly personal to Shelley himself, and one can scarcely suppose he would put into it a theistic phrase if he steadfastly professed atheism. Still, one must hesitate before laying any very great stress, or putting any very sharply defined construction, on its terms.

We next (noting for what it may be worth the couplet from *Epipsychidion*—1820—quoted on p. clxiv.) step back to the year 1819, and observe, in a letter to Leigh Hunt dated 27th September, an expression which counts for a good deal. "It would give me much pleasure to know Mr. Lloyd. Do you know, when I was in Cumberland, I got Southey to borrow a copy of Berkeley from him; and I remember observing some pencil notes in it, probably written by Lloyd, which I thought particularly acute. One especially struck me as being the assertion of a doctrine of which even then I had long been persuaded, and on which I had founded much of my persuasions as regarded the imagined cause of the universe—'Mind cannot create, it can only perceive.'" To much the same effect, but more extended and ratiocinative, is a passage in an unfinished essay by Shelley *On Life*: its date is not recorded, but I should presume it to be probably between 1815 and 1818, rather of the earlier

* There is also a third phrase, in the *Defence of Poetry*: "a poem . . . . is the creation of actions according to the unchangeable forms of human nature, as existing in the mind of the Creator, which is itself the image of all other minds." Here the word "Creator," having a capital initial letter (as printed in the *Essays and Letters*, vol. i., p. 12) seems at first sight to mean "Creative Deity," and, if it did so, the passage would be a very important one for our present purpose: but, on considering the entire clause and context, I can only infer that the "Creator" here spoken of is simply the human poet, ποιητής.

than the later limit of date. I give in a condensed form the most important portion. "Nothing exists but as it is perceived. Pursuing the same thread of reasoning, the existence of distinct individual minds, similar to that which is employed in now questioning its own nature, is likewise found to be a delusion. Let it not be supposed that this doctrine conducts to the monstrous presumption that I, the person who now write and think, am that one mind. I am but a portion of it. The relations of *things* remain unchanged, by whatever system. Yet that the basis of things cannot be, as the popular philosophy alleges, Mind, is sufficiently evident. Mind, as far as we have any experience of its properties (and beyond that experience how vain is argument!) cannot create—it can only perceive. It is said also to be 'the cause.' But 'cause' is only a word expressing a certain state of the human mind with regard to the manner in which two thoughts are apprehended to be related to each other. It is infinitely improbable that the cause of mind—that is, of existence—is similar to mind." We shall probably not get beyond this in our endeavour to ascertain the bearing of Shelley's understanding with regard to the existence or nature of a Deity. Clearly, when he wrote these lines, he did not believe in what is called "an Intelligent First Cause"—the God, self-existent from all eternity, of theologians. At the same time, he did believe in a universal Mind, whereof he himself, the intellect or person Shelley, was a part; and he further believed that all we ordinarily call external objects, or matter, are but the sum of perceptions of the total Mind. I must leave it to theosophists to decide whether this comes nearest to theism, atheism, or pantheism—I presume to the last. I apprehend that from beginning to end—whether in *The Necessity of Atheism* or *The Boat on the Serchio*—Shelley's conception was equally and unswervingly alien from the Personal God or Immediate Providence of the Jewish, Christian, Mahometan, and so many other religions.

2. *The Immortality of the Soul.* As regards this question, we must primarily remember what we have just traced—viz.: That Shelley considered (at one stage of his speculations at any rate) that there are not, properly, separate minds, but that there is one universal mind informing many personalities; also that the so-called Material Universe is in fact a mere perception of Universal Mind, which Mind must consequently be eternal—or

at any rate must endure as long as any perception, commonly called any Material Universe, shall endure. Therefore, in a certain sense, Shelley could not, at the same time with this belief, entertain a belief in the Mortality of the Soul, or of Mind. To withdraw from the sum of mind that particular mind currently termed Shelley would, according to this view of the matter, be an extinction of soul in the same sense (and no other) as the absorption into the sand of a ladle-full of sea-water is an annihilation of the sea.

But "the Immortality of *the* Soul" is generally understood as meaning "the eternal separate self-consciousness of every individual soul." Now it is plain that this doctrine is not necessarily involved in the hypothesis of Shelley as above expressed: he might, without self-contradiction, either add it to, or reject it from, his hypothesis. He might, for instance, believe that the portions of mind individuated in Keats and Shelley on the earth would not, after the death of the body, continue eternally and separately to be, the one Keats, and the other Shelley. What we have to investigate therefore is—How near did he approach to this phase of opinion?

The last indication on this subject is of a date, 29th June 1822, very close indeed to Shelley's death: it occurs in a letter to some correspondent whose name is not given. "The destiny of man can scarcely be so degraded that he was born only to die; and, if such *should* be the case, delusions, especially the gross and preposterous ones of the existing religion, can scarcely be supposed to exalt it." Here we see clearly that Shelley's mind, at the very last, was in a state of suspense on this question: he thought it scarcely likely that the death of the body was lethal to the soul also, but he *knew* nothing about the matter, and did not profess to know anything. This is confirmatory of what Trelawny records, from the same conversation that we have already quoted, though here the opinion appears in a more distinctly negative shape—possibly more so than the poet would have been prepared deliberately and in written disquisition to maintain. As we have seen, he had said: "If old women's tales are true,* in another minute I might have been in another planet." *Trelawny:* "No, you would be mingled

* This phrase, and the next ensuing question and answer, had never yet been in print. They are communicated to me by Mr. Trelawny, from his written memorandum of the conversation. The residue of the colloquy is in the *Recollections*.

with the elements." *Shelley:* "My mind is at peace respecting nothing so much as the constitution and mysteries of the great system of things. My curiosity on this point never amounts to solicitude." *Trelawny:* "Do you believe in the immortality of the spirit?" *Shelley:* "Certainly not: how can I? We know nothing; we have no evidence. We cannot express our inmost thoughts: they are incomprehensible, even to ourselves." Another and seemingly later conversation contains this passage, spoken by Shelley. "With regard to the great question, the System of the Universe, I have no curiosity on the subject. I am content to see no farther into futurity than Plato and Bacon. My mind is tranquil: I have no fears, and some hopes. In our present gross material state, our faculties are clouded: when Death removes our clay coverings, the mystery will be solved." This is the language, not of confidence in either direction, but of uncertainty: it goes a little way, but *only* a little, towards confirming an expression in a letter from Byron to Moore, dated 6th March 1822, "Shelley believes in immortality." Again, in the notes to *Hellas*, written in 1821, we find (vol. ii. p. 139) a similar uncertainty. The poet comments on some expressions in his own verses, which might be supposed to imply a positive belief in immortal individual souls; he here explains that he has no idea of dogmatizing on the subject. He does, indeed, absolutely disbelieve the ordinary hypothesis of retributive punishment; but he has no distinct counter-belief with regard to "the condition of that futurity towards which we are all impelled by an inextinguishable thirst for immortality. Until better arguments can be produced than sophisms which disgrace the cause, this desire itself must remain the strongest and the only presumption that eternity is the inheritance of every thinking being." The general tenor of *Adonais* may seem to amount to the expression of a positive belief in the immortality of Keats as a separate individual soul: but we must be on our guard against poetic abstractions and (not to use the word disrespectfully) poetic machinery. We read for instance that Keats "is not dead," "hath awakened from the dream of life," "is made one with Nature;" his soul "beacons from the abode where the Eternal are." If Shelley had thoroughly disbelieved the immortality of the soul, and had been writing in an expository strain, no doubt he would not and could not have used three of these expressions; but we cannot argue conversely, and say that, inasmuch

as he did use the expressions, he must have thoroughly believed in immortality. The substructure is much too unsolid for such a superposition. I will quote one more testimony—that of Mrs. Shelley, in the Preface to the *Essays and Letters*. She refers to a fragmentary essay *On a Future State* written by her husband, and observes that the extant portion discusses the question merely on grounds of reasoning and analogy, which he himself would not have considered the sole grounds adducible. She then adds :—"I cannot pretend to supply the deficiency, nor say what Shelley's views were. They were vague, certainly; yet as certainly regarded the country beyond the grave as one by no means foreign to our interests and hopes. Considering his individual mind as a unit divided from a mighty whole, to which it was united by restless sympathies and an eager desire for knowledge, he assuredly believed that hereafter, as now, he would form a portion of the whole—and a portion less imperfect, less suffering, than the shackles inseparable from humanity impose on all who live beneath the moon." Mrs. Shelley also cites an extract from Shelley's diary, written when death seemed near him. This must apparently be dated in 1814; the essay *On a Future State*, perhaps about the same date, 1815 to 1818, as the fragment *On Life* previously cited. As these dates are so far back, and as our enquiries have already yielded a tolerably plain result as to Shelley's views towards the close of his life, I shall say no more regarding those earlier writings, save that they do not alter the general result in question. The essay, indeed, comes to much the same conclusion as the note on *Hellas*, and goes somewhat further in opposition to the hypothesis of immortality.

What, then, is the result? I take it to be this :—That Shelley regarded the aspiration of man after individual immortality as *some* presumption in favour of that, and he himself had the aspiration in a marked degree; but at the same time he considered it a mere presumption—unproved, incapable of proof, and exceedingly uncertain. He found it difficult to *con*ceive that man is mortal, and alike difficult to *per*ceive that he is immortal.

3. *Political Institutions.* There is not very much to be said in detail on this matter. Shelley was an intense lover of freedom, and his ideal of freedom was a democratic republic. In his *Ode to Liberty*, written in 1820, he expresses a longing that

"the impious name of king" might be stamped into the dust; and, wherever the people rose against oppression, or to secure to themselves an ampler share of liberty and power, Shelley's prompt and ardent sympathies were with them. "He looked on political freedom," says Mrs. Shelley, "as the direct agent to effect the happiness of mankind." He "loved and respected the people," and he worshiped the idea of equality. Yet he was fully sensible, as several passages in his writings prove, of the difficulties and dangers which would attend a sudden transfer of power to the hands of the masses, ground down by oppression, and unprepared for self-government. He especially deprecated anything like retaliation—any perpetuation of wrong and violence by the lately oppressed, uncontrolled, and in their turn oppressors. There is, indeed, in a letter of Shelley's dated 1st September 1820, one ruthless passage. "At Naples the constitutional party have declared to the Austrian minister that, if the Emperor should make war on them, their first action would be to put to death all the members of the royal family—a necessary and most just measure, where the forces of the combatants, as well as the merits of their respective causes, are so unequal. That kings should be everywhere the hostages for liberty were admirable." This, it will be observed, is advocated as a measure of self-defence, not of retaliation; but, even in the former aspect, it is quite contrary to the permanent and true bent of Shelley's feelings, and must fairly be regarded as the expression of excitement and impassioned perturbation, not of deliberate judgment. Medwin, speaking of the last year or so of Shelley's life, goes so far as to say that the poet "quoted [and the biographer evidently means that he quoted with acquiescence] the sentiment of the amiable Rousseau, that he had rather behold the then state of things than the shedding of a single drop" of blood.

I am satisfied, however, that Medwin lets down Shelley's republicanism too easy. He does indeed allow that "Shelley used to say that a republic was the best form of government, with disinterestedness, abnegation of self, and a Spartan virtue; but to produce which required the black bread and soup of the Lacedæmonians, an equality of fortunes unattainable in the present factitious state of society, and only to be brought about by an agrarian law, and a consequent baptism of blood." But to say that "the poet was not so great a republican at heart as

Mrs. Shelley makes him out," and "and did not love a democracy," is rash ; and "that he was in some respects as aristocratic as Byron, and was far from despising the advantages of birth and station," may be safely pronounced incorrect inferentially, if not literally. "No one was a truer admirer of our triune constitution" is really a puerile assertion : there must be a very large number of admirers of our triune constitution—or else the latter is in a bad way—truer than the man who denounced the kingly office, and the House of Commons as it existed in his own time, and who, amid a miscellany of writings bearing on political matters, found no word of praise to indite* concerning that constitution either in its essence or in its actual development. Besides, the reader has already seen, from Shelley himself and from Hogg,† that the poet's interest in English history was extremely feeble, and that he "knew little and cared nothing" about the British constitution.

XXXIII.—MINOR WRITINGS OF SHELLEY.

The most important of Shelley's compositions, whether in poetry or in prose, have already been notified in this memoir; and, as for poetry, our edition contains (practically) everything of his that can be traced out. A few particulars, however, may not be unwelcome here as to his less known writings : I shall name such only as have not been specified in the memoir, or elsewhere in this edition, and of these I shall set down *all* that I can find a record of.

Towards the beginning of 1809. A wild and extravagant romance about a witch, entitled *The Nightmare.* Shelley and Medwin, in alternate chapters, began this performance, but afterwards laid it aside for *The Wandering Jew.*

1810. According to Medwin, Shelley translated in this year a volume of German tales. There is strong reason, however, for believing that Shelley did not as yet read German, and that his cousin's statement is therefore delusive. At the end of the year he was projecting a novel, to be a deathblow to intolerance; apparently the same novel which we find him soon afterwards

* I know of none ; but am free to confess that the pamphlet on Reform, by "The Hermit of Marlow," is unknown to me save by a few republished extracts. There was also a later and longer book on Reform written by Shelley, about the end of 1819, but never yet published—which it ought to have been ere now.

† Pp. clviii., clx.

writing in conjunction with Hogg, in the form of letters. It was never completed.

1811. Shelley intended to include in the *Fragments of Margaret Nicholson* an apostrophe to the dagger of Brutus, and wrote it, but not in time; its composition may perhaps belong to 1811. He began an Oxford prize poem, but left the University before it was finished. He published under the signature of "A Master of Arts of Oxford," probably in the *Morning Chronicle*, a letter upholding the candidateship of Lord Grenville as Chancellor of the University. His introduction to Leigh Hunt arose from his offering to Mr. Rowland Hunter (a connexion of Mrs. Hunt), for publication, a poem which his friend speaks of as unsuited to the firm: I find no further notice of this. He translated a treatise by Buffon. An *Essay on Love*, a short poem which he mentions in a letter of 1812 to Godwin, may perhaps also belong to the year 1811.

1812. He wrote and printed, but did not strictly publish, an indignant letter of some length to Lord Ellenborough, the judge who had sentenced a bookseller, Mr. Eaton, for publishing the Third Part of Paine's *Age of Reason:* some portions of this letter are inserted into the notes to *Queen Mab*, and the rest is in the *Shelley Memorials*. He projected translating the *Système de la Nature* written by Baron d'Holbach, under the name of Mirabaud (whom he had also quoted in the same notes); but this idea was probably never put into execution, even by way of beginning. He compiled, and sent to Mr. Hookham, with a view to publication, a work termed *Biblical Extracts:* its precise quality is not revealed, but I should presume it to be a collection of passages from the Scriptures such as Shelley considered damaging to the Christian or Jewish religion, with appropriate comments.

1813. He "translated an essay or treatise of some French philosopher on the Perfectibility of the Human Species"; and the two essays of Plutarch *περὶ τῆς σαρκοφαγίας*. In this year, or perhaps earlier, he commenced a sort of variation of Göthe's *Werther*, from which Hogg gives an extract. An accomplished Shelleyite has suggested to me that this excerpt (a letter purporting to be written to Werther by the husband of Charlotte) may be less merely Wertherian, and more directly personal to Shelley himself, than Hogg allows the reader to infer. Without adopting this view of the matter, I recognize it as admissible;

if it is correct, the fragment probably belongs to the end of 1811, or beginning of 1812.

1814. From 28th July 1814 Shelley began keeping a diary. Mr. Garnett says it "accounts for every day of his life" thenceforward; which is only an apparent inconsistency with a statement made by Shelley himself in a letter of 26th January 1819 to Mr. Peacock, "I keep no journal." The reconciling explanation is that Shelley sometimes intermitted his journalizing, and then his wife kept it up.

1815. To this year we may perhaps roughly assign some of the prose compositions printed by Mrs. Shelley—*On Love*, *On the Punishment of Death*, and *Speculations on Morals;* the *Essay on Christianity* published in the *Shelley Memorials;* and that *On the Revival of Literature*, and *A System of Government by Juries* (a singular speculation), in the *Shelley Papers*. Mr. Trelawny tells me that Shelley said he had wished to write a Life of Christ, revoking the hasty after thought (expressed in a note to *Queen Mab*, p. 76) "that Jesus was an ambitious man who aspired to the throne of Judea"; but he added that he found the materials too deficient for reconstructing a Life having some solidity and authority. The *Essay on Christianity* may derive from this project, though what remains of it is doctrinal rather than biographical.

1816. *Remarks on Mandeville and Mr. Godwin.*

1817. Some observations *On Frankenstein.* Both these two last-mentioned productions are in the *Shelley Papers*, and had probably not been published elsewhere, though apparently written with a defined object.

1818. A criticism of Peacock's poem of *Rhododaphne*—now perhaps lost. The minor translations from Plato—*Ion*, *Menexenus*, and from *The Republic*—and the note *On a Passage in Crito*, may pertain to this year.

1819. The rhapsodic fragmentary tale named *The Coliseum* might, from its tone, be supposed a rather youthful production; but it cannot be that, as Mrs. Shelley says that *The Assassins*, written in 1814, "was composed many years before." Probably then *The Coliseum* was a result of Shelley's stay in Rome in 1819; as well as the brief remarks on the Laocoon, and Bacchus and Ampelus, published by Medwin. The notes on sculptures in Florence given in the *Essays and Letters* belong to a later date in the same year; and in November we find that Shelley had

"just finished a letter of five sheets on Carlile's affair" (Richard Carlile the publisher). The "affair" was a prosecution for selling irreligious books, and some circumstances in the way it had been got up were peculiarly open to animadversion. The letter was intended for the *Examiner*, but was not, I understand, actually published.

1820. In March of this year Shelley was dictating a translation of Spinoza to his wife: the *Essay on Prophecy*, which Mr. Middleton gives as a very early original writing of Shelley's, is in fact, so Mr. Garnett has traced out, done into English from the *Tractatus Theologico-politicus*,—and this may probably be what Shelley was dictating in 1820. A letter of the poet, dated 20th January 1821, says: "I was immeasurably amused by the quotation [in a paper by Archdeacon Hare] from Schlegel, about the way in which the popular faith is destroyed —first the Devil, then the Holy Ghost, then God the Father. I had written a Lucianic essay to prove the same thing." This must be the performance which Mrs. Shelley mentions by the title of *The Essay on Devils*, and of which Mr. Garnett says: "This amusing fragment was prepared for publication in 1839, with the rest of Shelley's prose works, but withdrawn." Whether its date was shortly before 1821, or some considerable while before, is not specified.

XXXIV.—AUTHORITIES.

A very brief reference to the principal authorities for the life of Shelley will close my notice. These I shall set forth in something like a descending scale of their practical importance for the biographer's purpose, irrespectively of their deservings in other regards.

1. The *Essays, Letters from Abroad, Translations, and Fragments*, edited by Mrs. Shelley.

2. The notices by Mrs. Shelley in her collected edition of the Poems, included in our issue.

3. Hogg's *Life of Shelley*, 2 vols., reaching only to the beginning of the year 1814. Some casual remarks have already been made on this truncated book, in the course of the present memoir. With all its defects, it is simply invaluable as the authority for the early career of Shelley, as a record of his tone of mind and character from a particular point of view, and as a masterly though eccentric sample of biography.

4. The *Shelley Memorials*, edited by Lady Shelley, comes nearest to being a complete life of the poet, combining authenticity and method in the narrative portion, though only a rapid summary, with many interesting supplementary materials. It is clear that Shelley need not lack a creditable biographer on a full scale as long as the writer of the *Memorials* is there to undertake the office at need.

5. Trelawny's *Recollections of the Last Days of Shelley and Byron*. This excellent volume gives (so far as Shelley is concerned) simply what fell under Trelawny's personal observation, or was related thereto, in the last half-year or so of Shelley's life. For that brief period it is incomparably good, and shows a most affectionate, as well as vigorous and manly, appreciation of the poet's character and powers.

6. Shelley's own Poems.

7. Medwin's *Life of Shelley*, 2 vols. This book, first published in 1847, is neither very strong-minded nor very accurate: but it has sunk unduly out of observation—or *had* so sunk, being just now notified as republished in one volume. Medwin had on the whole, next to Mrs. Shelley and perhaps Mr. Hogg, the best opportunities of all the poet's biographers; and has used them with a light and slight touch, but with considerable sympathy, and to a readable result. Several matters not to be found elsewhere at first hand are in these volumes.

8. The three articles published by Mr. Peacock in *Fraser's Magazine* in 1858 and 1860: the third of them consists of very valuable letters by Shelley himself. These articles are of course excellently written, and with a great deal of knowledge, and are indispensable as accompaniments to other records.

9. *Leigh Hunt's Autobiography*, 1860, embodies what he had said about Shelley in the work named *Lord Byron and some of his Contemporaries*. The record of Shelley is full of affectionate feeling, with quick though perhaps limited insight. The *Correspondence* of Leigh Hunt contains several letters from and to Shelley. Of the former, almost all are in the *Essays and Letters*.

10. The article by Mr. Thornton Hunt, entitled *Shelley, by one who knew him*, in the *Atlantic Monthly* for February 1863. There is much important matter in this brief notice, which is conspicuous for its outspoken and independent tone. It should by no means be overlooked by the biographer.

11. Mr. Garnett's *Relics of Shelley*, and his article in *Macmillan's Magazine* for June 1860, stand alone within their own special sphere. The *Relics* consist principally of fragments of Shelley's poems previously unpublished: there are also a few documents, and a very able discussion by Mr. Garnett regarding the separation from Harriet, and Mr. Peacock's account of that matter.

12. *Shelley and his Writings*, by Mr. C. S. Middleton, 2 vols., 1858. This is principally based on Medwin, Hogg, and the notes by Mrs. Shelley. The author had no personal knowledge of the poet; yet there are some few particulars, especially with regard to his writings, not to be found elsewhere.

13. The *Shelley Papers*, and the *Conversations of Lord Byron*, by Medwin. The biographical information contained in the former small volume is wholly, or very nearly, re-produced in the *Life of Shelley* by the same author.

14. Moore's *Life of Lord Byron* contains, at first hand, a few particulars affecting Shelley as connected with his lordship.

My task here terminates. I have written of the immortal poet, and the man alike loveable and admirable, with one all-dominating desire—that of stating the exact truth, as far as I can ascertain or infer it, whatever may be its bearing. Any judgment pronounced upon Shelley ought to be that of a sympathizing and grateful as well as an equitable man; sympathizing, for history records no more beautiful nature,—grateful, for how much do we not all owe him! Our sympathy and gratitude entitle us to be fearless likewise; and for myself I should have felt any slurring-over of dubious or censurable particulars to be so much derogation from my reverence for Shelley. The *meaning* of slurring-over (apart from motives of obligation and delicacy) is unmistakeable: it must imply that the person who adopts that course feels a little ashamed of his hero, and, to justify his professed admiration in the eyes of others, presents that hero to them as something slightly other than he really was. But I feel not at all ashamed of Shelley. He asks for no sup-

pressions, he needs none, and from me he gets none. After everything has been stated, we find that the man Shelley was worthy to be the poet Shelley,—and praise cannot reach higher than that; we find him to call forth the most eager and fervent homage, and to be one of the ultimate glories of our race and planet.

THE POETICAL WORKS

OF

PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY.

QUEEN MAB.

TO HARRIET SHELLEY.

Whose is the love that, gleaming through the world,
Wards off the poisonous arrow of its scorn?
Whose is the warm and partial praise,
Virtue's most sweet reward?

Beneath whose looks did my reviving soul
Riper in truth and virtuous daring grow?
Whose eyes have I gazed fondly on,
And loved mankind the more?

Harriet! on thine:—thou wert my purer mind;
Thou wert the inspiration of my song:
Thine are these early wilding flowers,
Though garlanded by me.

Then press into thy breast this pledge of love;
And know, though time may change and years may roll,
Each floweret gathered in my heart
It consecrates to thine.

QUEEN MAB.

I.

How wonderful is Death—
Death, and his brother Sleep!
One, pale as yonder waning moon,
With lips of lurid blue;

The other, rosy as the morn
When, throned on ocean's wave,
It blushes o'er the world:
Yet both so passing wonderful!

Hath then the gloomy Power
Whose reign is in the tainted sepulchres
Seized on her sinless soul?
Must that divinest form,
Which love and admiration cannot view
Without a beating heart, those azure veins
Which steal like streams along a field of snow,
That lovely outline, which is fair
As breathing marble, perish?
Must putrefaction's breath
Leave nothing of this heavenly sight
But loathsomeness and ruin?
Spare nothing but a gloomy theme
On which the lightest heart might moralize?
Or is it only a sweet slumber
Stealing o'er sensation,
Which the breath of roseate morning
Chaseth into darkness?
Will Ianthe wake again,
And give that faithful bosom joy
Whose sleepless spirit waits to catch
Light, life, and rapture from her smile?

Yes! she will wake again,
Although her glowing limbs are motionless,
And silent those sweet lips,
Once breathing eloquence
That might have soothed a tiger's rage,
Or thawed the cold heart of a conqueror.
Her dewy eyes are closed,
And on their lids, whose texture fine
Scarce hides the dark-blue orbs beneath,
The baby Sleep is pillowed:
Her golden tresses shade
The bosom's stainless pride,
Curling like tendrils of the parasite
Around a marble column.

Hark! whence that rushing sound?
'Tis like a wondrous strain that sweeps
Around a lonely ruin,
When west winds sigh, and evening waves respond
In whispers from the shore;
'Tis wilder than the unmeasured notes
Which from the unseen lyres of dells and groves
The genii of the breezes sweep.

Floating on waves of music and of light,
Behold the chariot of the Fairy Queen!
Celestial coursers paw the unyielding air;
Their filmy pennons at her word they furl,
And stop obedient to the reins of light.
These the Queen of Spells drew in;
She spread a charm around the spot;
And, leaning graceful from the etherial car,
Long did she gaze and silently
Upon the slumbering maid.

Human eye hath ne'er beheld
A shape so wild, so bright, so beautiful,
As that which o'er the maiden's charmèd sleep,
Waving a starry wand,
Hung like a mist of light.
The broad and yellow moon
Shone dimly through her form—
That form of faultless symmetry;
The pearly and pellucid car
Moved not the moonlight's line.
'Twas not an earthly pageant.
Those who had looked upon the sight,
Passing all human glory,
Saw not the yellow moon,
Saw not the mortal scene,—
Heard not the night-wind's rush,
Heard not an earthly sound;
Saw but the fairy pageant,—
Heard but the heavenly strains
That filled the lonely dwelling.

The Fairy's frame was slight; slight as some cloud
That catches but the palest tinge of day

When evening yields to night,—
Bright as that fibrous woof when stars indue
Its transitory robe.
Her thin and misty form
Moved with the moving air;
Such sounds as breathed around like odorous winds
Of wakening Spring arose,
Filling the chamber and the midnight sky.

"Maiden, the world's supremest Spirit
Beneath the shadow of her wings
Folds all thy memory doth inherit
From ruin of divinest things,—
Feelings that lure thee to betray,
And light of thoughts that pass away.

"For thou hast earned a mighty boon;
The truths which wisest poets see
Dimly, thy mind may make its own,
Rewarding its own majesty,
Entranced in some diviner mood
Of self-oblivious solitude.

"Custom and faith and power thou spurnest,
From hate and awe thy heart is free;
Ardent and pure as day thou burnest;
For dark and cold mortality
A living light to cheer it long
The watch fires of the world among.

"Therefore, from Nature's inner shrine,
Where gods and fiends in worship bend,
Majestic Spirit, be it thine
The dame to seize, the veil to rend,
Where [illegible] vast snake Eternity
In charmed sleep doth ever lie.

"All that inspires thy voice of love,
Charpeale in the [illegible]ing eyes,
Or through thy [illegible]th burn and move,
Or think of [illegible]e, arise!
Spirit, leave, for mine and me,
Earth's unsubstantial mimicry!"

It ceased: and from the mute and moveless frame
A radiant Spirit rose,
All beautiful in naked purity.
Instinct with inexpressible beauty and grace,
Each stain of earthliness
Had passed away; it reassumed
Its native dignity, and stood
Immortal amid ruin.

Upon the couch the body lay,
Wrapped in the depth of slumber:
Its features were fixed and meaningless;
Yet animal life was there,
And every organ yet performed
Its natural functions. 'Twas a sight
Of wonder to behold the body and Soul.
The self-same lineaments, the same
Marks of identity, were there;
Yet oh how different! One aspires to heaven,
Pants for its sempiternal heritage,
And, ever-changing, ever-rising still,
Wantons in endless being.
The other, for a time the unwilling sport
Of circumstance and passion, struggles on;
Fleets through its sad duration rapidly;
Then, like a useless and worn-out machine,
Rots, perishes, and passes.

Fairy. Spirit who hast dived so deep,
Spirit who hast soared so high,
Thou the fearless, thou the mild,
Accept the boon thy worth hath earned,—
Ascend the car with me.

Spirit. Do I dream? Is this new feeling
But a visioned ghost of slumber?
If indeed I am a Soul,
A free, a disembodied Soul,
Speak again to me.

Fairy. I am the Fairy Mab. To me 'tis given
The wonders of the human world to keep.

The secrets of the immeasurable past
In the unfailing consciences of men,
Those stern unflattering chroniclers, I find.
The future, from the causes which arise
In each event, I gather. Not the sting
Which retributive memory implants
In the hard bosom of the selfish man,
Nor that ecstatic and exulting throb
Which virtue's votary feels when he sums up
The thoughts and actions of a well-spent day,
Are unforeseen, unregistered by me:
And it is yet permitted me to rend
The veil of mortal frailty, that the spirit,
Clothed in its changeless purity, may know
How soonest to accomplish the great end
For which it hath its being, and may taste
That peace which in the end all life will share.
This is the meed of virtue; happy Soul,
Ascend the car with me!

The chains of earth's immurement
Fell from Ianthe's Spirit;
They shrank and brake like bandages of straw
Beneath a wakened giant's strength.
She knew her glorious change,
And felt in apprehension uncontrolled
New raptures opening round:
Each day-dream of her mortal life,
Each frenzied vision of the slumbers
That closed each well-spent day,
Seemed now to meet reality.
The Fairy and the Soul proceeded;
The silver clouds disparted;
And, as the car of magic they ascended,
Again the speechless music swelled,
Again the coursers of the air
Unfurled their azure pennons, and the Queen,
Shaking the beauty-rains
Bade them pursue their way.

The magic car moved on.
The night was fair, and countless stars

Studded heaven's dark-blue vault,—
The eastern wave grew pale
With the first smile of morn.
The magic car moved on.
From the celestial hoofs
The atmosphere in flaming sparkles flew;
And, where the burning wheels
Eddied above the mountain's loftiest peak,
Was traced a line of lightning.
Now far above a rock, the utmost verge
Of the wide earth, it flew—
The rival of the Andes, whose dark brow
Loured o'er the silver sea.

Far far below the chariot's path,
Calm as a slumbering babe,
Tremendous Ocean lay.
The mirror of its stillness showed
The pale and waning stars,
The chariot's fiery track,
And the grey light of morn
Tinging those fleecy clouds
That cradled in their folds the infant dawn.
The chariot seemed to fly
Through the abyss of an immense concave,
Radiant with million constellations, tinged
With shades of infinite colour,
And semicircled with a belt
Flashing incessant meteors.

The magic car moved on.
As they approached their goal,
The coursers seemed to gather speed.
The sea no longer was distinguished; earth
Appeared a vast and shadowy sphere;
The sun's unclouded orb
Rolled through the black concave;
Its rays of rapid light
Parted around the chariot's swifter course,
And fell like ocean's feathery spray
Dashed from the boiling surge
Before a vessel's prow.

The magic car moved on.
Earth's distant orb appeared
The smallest light that twinkles in the heavens
Whilst round the chariot's way
Innumerable systems rolled,
And countless spheres diffused
An ever-varying glory.
It was a sight of wonder: some
Were hornèd like the crescent moon;
Some shed a mild and silver beam
Like Hesperus o'er thè western sea;
Some dashed athwart with trains of flame,
Like worlds to death and ruin driven;
Some shone like stars, and, as the chariot passed,
Bedimmed all other light.

Spirit of Nature! here,
In this interminable wilderness
Of worlds at whose immensity
Even soaring fancy staggers,
Here is thy fitting temple.
Yet not the lightest leaf
That quivers to the passing breeze
Is less instinct with thee:
Yet not the meanest worm
That lurks in graves and fattens on the dead
Less shares thy eternal breath.
Spirit of Nature! thou
Imperishable as this glorious scene!
Here is thy fitting temple!

II.

If solitude hath ever led thy steps
To the wild ocean's echoing shore,
And thou hast lingered there
Until the sun's broad orb
Seemed resting on the burnished wave,—
Thou must have marked the braided webs of gold
That without motion hung
Over the sinking sphere:
Thou must have marked the billowy mountain-clouds
Edged with intolerable radiancy,

Towering like rocks of jet
Above the burning deep.
And yet there is a moment—
When the sun's highest point
Peeps like a star o'er ocean's western edge—
When those far clouds of feathery purple gleam
Like islands on a dark blue sea;
Then has thy fancy soared above the earth,
And furled its wearied wing
Within the Fairy's fane.
Yet not the golden islands
That gleam amid yon flood of purple light
Nor the feathery curtains
That canopy the sun's resplendent couch,
Nor the burnished ocean-waves
Paving that gorgeous dome,
So fair, so wonderful a sight
As Mab's etherial palace could afford.
Yet likest evening's vault, that fairy hall.
As heaven low resting on the wave, it spread
Its floors of flashing light,
Its vast and azure dome;
And, on the verge of that obscure abyss
Where crystal battlements o'erhang the gulf
Of the dark world, ten thousand spheres diffuse
Their lustre thro' its adamantine gates.

The magic car no longer moved.
The Fairy and the Spirit
Entered the hall of spells.
Those golden clouds
That rolled in glittering billows
Beneath the azure canopy
With the etherial footsteps trembled not:
The light and crimson mists
Floated to strains of thrilling melody
Through the vast columns and the pearly shrines.

"Spirit," the Fairy said,
And pointed to the gorgeous dome,
"This is a wondrous sight,
And mocks all human grandeur;

But, were it virtue's only meed to dwell
In a celestial palace, all resigned
To pleasurable impulses, immured
Within the prison of itself, the will
Of changeless Nature would be unfulfilled.
Learn to make others happy. Spirit, come!
This is thine high reward:—the past shall rise;
Thou shalt behold the present; I will teach
The secrets of the future."

The Fairy and the Spirit
Approached the overhanging battlement.—
Below lay stretched the universe.
There, far as the remotest line
That bounds imagination's flight,
Countless and unending orbs
In mazy motion intermingled,
Yet still fulfilled immutably
Eternal Nature's law.
Above, below, around,
The circling systems formed
A wilderness of harmony;
Each with undeviating aim,
In eloquent silence, through the depths of space
Pursued its wondrous way.

There was a little light
That twinkled in the misty distance.
None but a spirit's eye
Might ken that rolling orb;
None but a spirit's eye,
And in no other place
But that celestial dwelling, might behold
Each action of this Earth's inhabitants.
But matter, space, and time,
In those aërial mansions cease to act;
And all-prevailing wisdom, when it reaps
The harvest of its excellence, o'erbounds
Those obstacles of which the [illegible] soul
Fears to attempt the conquest.

The Fairy pointed to the Earth.
The Spirit's intellectual eye

Its kindred beings recognized.
The thronging thousands, to a passing view,
Seemed like an ant-hill's citizens.
How wonderful that even
The passions, prejudices, interests,
That sway the meanest being, the weak touch
That moves the finest nerve,
And in one human brain
Causes the faintest thought, becomes a link
In the great chain of nature!

"Behold," the Fairy cried,
"Palmyra's ruined palaces!—
Behold where grandeur frowned;
Behold where pleasure smiled.
What now remains?—the memory
Of senselessness and shame.
What is immortal there?
Nothing.—It stands to tell
A melancholy tale, to give
An awful warning: soon
Oblivion will steal silently
The remnant of its fame.
Monarchs and conquerors there
Proud o'er prostrate millions trod—
The earthquakes of the human race,—
Like them, forgotten when the ruin
That marks their shock is past.

"Beside the eternal Nile
The Pyramids have risen.
Nile shall pursue his changeless way;
Those Pyramids shall fall;
Yea, not a stone shall stand to tell
The spot whereon they stood;
Their very site shall be forgotten,
As is their builder's name.

"Behold yon sterile spot,
Where now the wandering Arab's tent
Flaps in the desert-blast.
There once old Salem's haughty fane

Reared high to heaven its thousand golden domes,
And in the blushing face of day
Exposed its shameful glory.
Oh ! many a widow, many an orphan, cursed
The building of that fane ; and many a father,
Worn out with toil and slavery, implored
The poor man's God to sweep it from the earth,
And spare his children the detested task
Of piling stone on stone, and poisoning
The choicest days of life,
To soothe a dotard's vanity.
There an inhuman and uncultured race
Howled hideous praises to their Demon-God.
They rushed to war, tore from the mother's womb
The unborn child,—old age and infancy
Promiscuous perished ; their victorious arms
Left not a soul to breathe. Oh ! they were fiends !
But what was he who taught them that the God
Of nature and benevolence had given
A special sanction to the trade of blood ?
His name and theirs are fading ; and the tales
Of this barbarian nation, which imposture
Recites till terror credits, are pursuing
Itself into forgetfulness.

"Where Athens, Rome, and Sparta stood,
There is a moral desert now.
The mean and miserable huts,
The yet more wretched palaces,
Contrasted with those ancient fanes
Now crumbling to oblivion ;
The long and lonely colonnades,
Through which the ghost of Freedom stalks ;
Seem like a well-known tune,
Which in some dear scene we have loved to hear,
Remembered now in sadness.
But oh ! how much more changed,
How gloomier is the contrast
Of human nature there !
Where Socrates expired, a tyrant's slave,
A coward and a fool, spreads death around—
Then, shuddering, meets his own.

Where Cicero and Antoninus lived,
A cowled and hypocritical monk
Prays, curses, and deceives.

"Spirit! ten thousand years
Have scarcely passed away
Since, in the waste where now the savage drinks
His enemy's blood, and, aping Europe's sons,
Wakes the unholy song of war,
Arose a stately city,
Metropolis of the western continent.
There now the mossy column-stone,
Indented by Time's unrelaxing grasp,
Which once appeared to brave
All save its country's ruin;
There the wide forest-scene,
Rude in the uncultivated loveliness
Of gardens long run wild,
Seems, to the unwilling sojourner whose steps
Chance in that desert has delayed,
Thus to have stood since earth was what it is.
Yet once it was the busiest haunt
Whither, as to a common centre, flocked
Strangers, and ships, and merchandize:
Once peace and freedom blessed
The cultivated plain.
But wealth, that curse of man,
Blighted the bud of its prosperity:
Virtue and wisdom, truth and liberty,
Fled, to return not until man shall know
That they alone can give the bliss
Worthy a soul that claims
Its kindred with eternity.

"There's not one atom of yon earth
But once was living man;
Nor the minutest drop of rain
That hangeth in its thinnest cloud,
But flowed in human veins:
And from the burning plains
Where Libyan monsters yell,
From the most gloomy glens

Of Greenland's sunless clime,
To where the golden fields
Of fertile England spread
Their harvest to the day,
Thou canst not find one spot
Whereon no city stood.

"How strange is human pride!
I tell thee that those living things
To whom the fragile blade of grass
That springeth in the morn
And perisheth ere noon
Is an unbounded world,—
I tell thee that those viewless beings
Whose mansion is the smallest particle
Of the impassive atmosphere,—
Think, feel, and live, like man;
That their affections and antipathies,
Like his, produce the laws
Ruling their moral state;
And the minutest throb
That through their frame diffuses
The slightest, faintest motion,
Is fixed and indispensable
As the majestic laws
That rule yon rolling orbs."

The Fairy paused. The Spirit,
In ecstacy of admiration, felt
All knowledge of the past revived. The events
Of old and wondrous times,
Which dim tradition interruptedly
Teaches the credulous vulgar, were unfolded
In just perspective to the view,
Yet dim from their infinitude.
The Spirit seemed to stand
High on an isolated pinnacle;
The flood of ages combating below,
The depth of the unbounded universe
Above, and all around
Nature's unchanging harmony.

III.

"FAIRY!" the Spirit said,
And on the Queen of Spells
Fixed her etherial eyes,
"I thank thee. Thou hast given
A boon which I will not resign, and taught
A lesson not to be unlearned. I know
The past, and thence I will essay to glean
A warning for the future, so that man
May profit by his errors, and derive
Experience from his folly:
For, when the power of imparting joy
Is equal to the will, the human soul
Requires no other heaven.

Fairy. Turn thee, surpassing Spirit!
Much yet remains unscanned.
Thou know'st how great is man,
Thou know'st his imbecility:—
Yet learn thou what he is;
Yet learn the lofty destiny
Which restless Time prepares
For every living soul.

Behold a gorgeous palace that amid
Yon populous city rears its thousand towers,
And seems itself a city. Gloomy troops
Of sentinels, in stern and silent ranks,
Encompass it around. The dweller there
Cannot be free and happy; hear'st thou not
The curses of the fatherless, the groans
Of those who have no friend? He passes on.
The King, the wearer of a gilded chain
That binds his soul to abjectness, the fool
Whom courtiers nickname monarch, whilst a slave
Even to the basest appetites—that man
Heeds not the shriek of penury; he smiles
At the deep curses which the destitute
Mutter in secret, and a sullen joy
Pervades his bloodless heart when thousands groan
But for those morsels which his wantonness
Wastes in unjoyous revelry, to save

All that they love from famine. When he hears
The tale of horror, to some ready-made face
Of hypocritical assent he turns,
Smothering the glow of shame that, spite of him,
Flushes his bloated cheek.
Now to the meal
Of silence, grandeur, and excess, he drags
His palled unwilling appetite. If gold
Gleaming around, and numerous viands culled
From every clime, could force the loathing sense
To overcome satiety,—if wealth
The spring it draws from poisons not,—or vice,
Unfeeling stubborn vice, converteth not
Its food to deadliest venom; then that king
Is happy; and the peasant who fulfils
His unforced task, when he returns at even,
And by the blazing faggot meets again
Her welcome for whom all his toil is sped,
Tastes not a sweeter meal.
Behold him now
Stretched on the gorgeous couch; his fevered brain
Reels dizzily awhile: but ah! too soon
The slumber of intemperance subsides,
And conscience, that undying serpent, calls
Her venomous brood to their nocturnal task.
Listen! he speaks! oh! mark that frenzied eye—
Oh! mark that deadly visage.

King. No cessation!
Oh! must this last for ever? Awful Death,
I wish yet fear to clasp thee! Not one moment
Of dreamless sleep! O dear and blessed Peace!
Why dost thou shroud thy vestal purity
In penury and dungeons? Wherefore lurkest
With danger, death, and solitude, yet shunn'st
The palace I have built thee? Sacred Peace!
Oh visit me but once, and pitying shed
One drop of balm upon my withered soul!

Fairy. Vain man! that palace is the virtuous heart,
And Peace defileth not her snowy robes
In such a shed as thine. Hark! yet he mutters;—

His slumbers are but varied agonies;
They prey like scorpions on the springs of life.
There needeth not the hell that bigots frame
To punish those who err: earth in itself
Contains at once the evil and the cure;
And all-sufficing Nature can chastise
Those who transgress her law,—she only knows
How justly to proportion to the fault
The punishment it merits.
Is it strange
That this poor wretch should pride him in his woe,
Take pleasure in his abjectness, and hug
The scorpion that consumes him? Is it strange
That, placed on a conspicuous throne of thorns,
Grasping an iron sceptre, and immured
Within a splendid prison, whose stern bounds
Shut him from all that 's good or dear on earth,
His soul asserts not its humanity?
That man's mild nature rises not in war
Against a king's employ? No—'tis not strange:
He, like the vulgar, thinks, feels, acts, and lives,
Just as his father did; the unconquered powers
Of precedent and custom interpose
Between a king and virtue. Stranger yet
(To those who know not nature, nor deduce
The future from the present) it may seem
That not one slave who suffers from the crimes
Of this unnatural being, not one wretch
Whose children famish, and whose nuptial bed
Is earth's unpitying bosom, rears an arm
To dash him from his throne!
Those gilded flies
That, basking in the sunshine of a court,
Fatten on its corruption—what are they?
The drones of the community. They feed
On the mechanic's labour; the starved hind
For them compels the stubborn glebe to yield
Its unshared harvests; and yon squalid form,
Leaner than fleshless misery, that wastes
A sunless life in the unwholesome mine,
Drags out in labour a protracted death

To glut their grandeur; many faint with toil,
That few may know the cares and woe of sloth.

Whence think'st thou kings and parasites arose?
Whence that unnatural line of drones, who heap
Toil and unvanquishable penury
On those who build their palaces, and bring
Their daily bread?—From vice, black loathsome vice;
From rapine, madness, treachery, and wrong;
From all that genders misery, and makes
Of earth this thorny wilderness; from lust,
Revenge, and murder.—And, when Reason's voice,
Loud as the voice of Nature, shall have waked
The nations; and mankind perceive that vice
Is discord, war, and misery—that virtue
Is peace, and happiness, and harmony;
When man's maturer nature shall disdain
The playthings of its childhood; kingly glare
Will lose its power to dazzle; its authority
Will silently pass by; the gorgeous throne
Shall stand unnoticed in the regal hall,
Fast falling to decay; whilst falsehood's trade
Shall be as hateful and unprofitable
As that of truth is now.
Where is the fame
Which the vainglorious mighty of the earth
Seek to eternize? Oh! the faintest sound
From Time's light footfall, the minutest wave
That swells the flood of ages, whelms in nothing
The unsubstantial bubble! Ay! to-day
Stern is the tyrant's mandate, red the gaze
That flashes desolation, strong the arm
That scatters multitudes. To-morrow comes:
That mandate is a thunder-peal that died
In ages past; that gaze, a transient flash
On which the midnight closed; and on that arm
The worm has made his meal.
The virtuous man,
As great in his humility as kings
Are little in their grandeur; he who leads
Invincibly a life of resolute good,
And stands amid the silent dungeon-depths

More free and fearless than the trembling judge
Who, clothed in venal power, vainly strove
To bind the impassive spirit;—when he falls,
His mild eye beams benevolence no more;
Withered the hand outstretched but to relieve;
Sunk reason's simple eloquence, that rolled
But to appal the guilty. Yes, the grave
Hath quenched that eye, and death's relentless frost
Withered that arm: but the unfading fame
Which virtue hangs upon its votary's tomb;
The deathless memory of that man whom kings
Call to their mind and tremble; the remembrance
With which the happy spirit contemplates
Its well-spent pilgrimage on earth,
Shall never pass away.

Nature rejects the monarch, not the man;
The subject, not the citizen: for kings
And subjects, mutual foes, for ever play
A losing game into each other's hands,
Whose stakes are vice and misery. The man
Of virtuous soul commands not, nor obeys.
Power, like a desolating pestilence,
Pollutes whate'er it touches; and obedience,
Bane of all genius, virtue, freedom, truth,
Makes slaves of men, and of the human frame
A mechanized automaton.
When Nero
High over flaming Rome with savage joy
Loured like a fiend, drank with enraptured ear
The shrieks of agonizing death, beheld
The frightful desolation spread, and felt
A new-created sense within his soul
Thrill to the sight, and vibrate to the sound;
Think'st thou his grandeur had not overcome
The force of human kindness? and, when Rome
With one stern blow hurled not the tyrant down,
Crushed not the arm red with her dearest blood,
Had not submissive abjectness destroyed
Nature's suggestions?
Look on yonder earth:
The golden harvests spring; the unfailing sun

Sheds light and life; the fruits, the flowers, the trees,
Arise in due succession; all things speak
Peace, harmony, and love. The Universe,
In nature's silent eloquence, declares
That all fulfil the works of love and joy,—
All but the outcast, Man. He fabricates
The sword which stabs his peace; he cherisheth
The snakes that gnaw his heart; he raiseth up
The tyrant whose delight is in his woe,
Whose sport is in his agony. Yon sun,
Lights it the great alone? Yon silver beams,
Sleep they less sweetly on the cottage thatch
Than on the dome of kings? Is mother Earth
A step-dame to her numerous sons who earn
Her unshared gifts with unremitting toil;
A mother only to those puling babes
Who, nursed in ease and luxury, make men
The playthings of their babyhood, and mar,
In self-important childishness, the peace
Which men alone appreciate?

Spirit of Nature! no!
The pure diffusion of thy essence throbs
Alike in every human heart.
Thou aye erectest there
Thy throne of power unappealable:
Thou art the judge beneath whose nod
Man's brief and frail authority
Is powerless as the wind
That passeth idly by:
Thine the tribunal which surpasseth
The show of human justice
As God surpasses man.

Spirit of Nature! thou
Life of interminable multitudes;
Soul of those mighty spheres
Whose changeless paths through heaven's deep silence lie;
Soul of that smallest being
The dwelling of whose life
Is one faint April sun-gleam;—
Man, like these passive things,
Thy will unconsciously fulfilleth:

Like theirs, his age of endless peace,
Which time is fast maturing,
Will swiftly, surely, come;
And the unbounded frame which thou pervadest
Will be without a flaw
Marring its perfect symmetry.

IV.

How beautiful this night! The balmiest sigh
Which vernal Zephyrs breathe in Evening's ear
Were discord to the speaking quietude
That wraps this moveless scene. Heaven's ebon vault,
Studded with stars unutterably bright,
Through which the moon's unclouded grandeur rolls,
Seems like a canopy which Love has spread
To curtain her sleeping world. Yon gentle hills
Robed in a garment of untrodden snow;
Yon darksome rocks whence icicles depend,
So stainless that their white and glittering spires
Tinge not the moon's pure beam; yon castled steep
Whose banner hangeth o'er the time-worn tower
So idly that rapt fancy deemeth it
A metaphor of peace;—all form a scene
Where musing Solitude might love to lift
Her soul above this sphere of earthliness,
Where Silence undisturbed might watch alone,—
So cold, so bright, so still.
The orb of day,
In southern climes, o'er ocean's waveless field
Sinks sweetly smiling: not the faintest breath
Steals o'er the unruffled deep; the clouds of eve
Reflect unmoved the lingering beam of day;
And vesper's image on the western main
Is beautifully still. To-morrow comes:
Cloud upon cloud, in dark and deepening mass,
Roll o'er the blackened waters; the deep roar
Of distant thunder mutters awfully;
Tempest unfolds its pinion o'er the gloom
That shrouds the boiling surge; the pitiless fiend,
With all his winds and lightnings, tracks his prey;
The torn deep yawns,—the vessel finds a grave
Beneath its jagged gulf.

Ah! whence yon glare
That fires the arch of heaven?—that dark-red smoke
Blotting the silver moon? The stars are quenched
In darkness, and the pure and spangling snow
Gleams faintly through the gloom that gathers round.
Hark to that roar whose swift and deafening peals
In countless echoes through the mountains ring,
Startling pale Midnight on her starry throne!
Now swells the intermingling din; the jar
Frequent and frightful of the bursting bomb;
The falling beam, the shriek, the groan, the shout,
The ceaseless clangor, and the rush of men
Inebriate with rage:—loud and more loud
The discord grows; till pale Death shuts the scene,
And o'er the conqueror and the conquered draws
His cold and bloody shroud.—Of all the men
Whom day's departing beam saw blooming there
In proud and vigorous health; of all the hearts
That beat with anxious life at sunset there;
How few survive, how few are beating now!
All is deep silence, like the fearful calm
That slumbers in the storm's portentous pause;
Save when the frantic wail of widowed love
Comes shuddering on the blast, or the faint moan
With which some soul bursts from the frame of clay
Wrapped round its struggling powers.
The grey morn
Dawns on the mournful scene; the sulphurous smoke
Before the icy wind slow rolls away,
And the bright beams of frosty morning dance
Along the spangling snow. There tracks of blood
Even to the forest's depth, and scattered arms,
And lifeless warriors whose hard lineaments
Death's self could change not, mark the dreadful path
Of the outsallying victors: far behind,
Black ashes note where their proud city stood.
Within yon forest is a gloomy glen—
Each tree which guards its darkness from the day
Waves o'er a warrior's tomb.
I see thee shrink,
Surpassing Spirit!—wert thou human else?
I see a shade of doubt and horror fleet

Across thy stainless features: yet fear not;
This is no unconnected misery,
Nor stands uncaused and irretrievable.
Man's evil nature, that apology
Which kings who rule, and cowards who crouch, set up
For their unnumbered crimes, sheds not the blood
Which desolates the discord-wasted land:
From kings, and priests, and statesmen, war arose,
Whose safety is man's deep unbettered woe,
Whose grandeur his debasement. Let the axe
Strike at the root, the poison-tree will fall;
And, where its venomed exhalations spread
Ruin and death and woe, where millions lay
Quenching the serpent's famine, and their bones
Bleaching unburied in the putrid blast,
A garden shall arise, in loveliness
Surpassing fabled Eden.
Hath Nature's soul,—
That formed this world so beautiful, that spread
Earth's lap with plenty, and life's smallest chord
Strung to unchanging unison, that gave
The happy birds their dwelling in the grove,
That yielded to the wanderers of the deep
The lovely silence of the unfathomed main,
And filled the meanest worm that crawls in dust
With spirit, thought, and love,—on Man alone,
Partial in causeless malice, wantonly
Heaped ruin, vice, and slavery? his soul
Blasted with withering curses; placed afar
The meteor happiness, that shuns his grasp,
But serving on the frightful gulf to glare,
Rent wide beneath his footsteps?
Nature!—no!
Kings, priests, and statesmen, blast the human flower,
Even in its tender bud; their influence darts
Like subtle poison through the bloodless veins
Of desolate society. The child,
Ere he can lisp his mother's sacred name,
Swells with the unnatural pride of crime, and lifts
His baby-sword even in a hero's mood.
This infant arm becomes the bloodiest scourge
Of devastated earth; whilst specious names,

Learnt in soft childhood's unsuspecting hour,
Serve as the sophisms with which manhood dims
Bright reason's ray, and sanctifies the sword
Upraised to shed a brother's innocent blood.
Let priest-led slaves cease to proclaim that man
Inherits vice and misery, when Force
And Falsehood hang even o'er the cradled babe,
Stifling with rudest grasp all natural good.

Ah! to the stranger-soul, when first it peeps
From its new tenement, and looks abroad
For happiness and sympathy, how stern
And desolate a tract is this wide world!
How withered all the buds of natural good!
No shade, no shelter from the sweeping storms
Of pitiless power! On its wretched frame—
Poisoned, perchance, by the disease and woe
Heaped on the wretched parent whence it sprung,
By morals, law, and custom,—the pure winds
Of heaven, that renovate the insect tribes,
May breathe not. The untainting light of day
May visit not its longings. It is bound
Ere it has life: yea, all the chains are forged
Long ere its being: all liberty and love
And peace is torn from its defencelessness;
Cursed from its birth, even from its cradle doomed
To abjectness and bondage!

Throughout this varied and eternal world
Soul is the only element, the block
That for uncounted ages has remained.
The moveless pillar of a mountain's weight
Is active living spirit. Every grain
Is sentient both in unity and part,
And the minutest atom comprehends
A world of loves and hatreds. These beget
Evil and good: hence truth and falsehood spring;
Hence will, and thought, and action, all the germs
Of pain or pleasure, sympathy or hate,
That variegate the eternal universe.
Soul is not more polluted than the beams
Of heaven's pure orb ere round their rapid lines
The taint of earth-born atmospheres arise.

Man is of soul and body, formed for deeds
Of high resolve ; on fancy's boldest wing
To soar unwearied, fearlessly to turn
The keenest pangs to peacefulness, and taste
The joys which mingled sense and spirit yield.
Or he is formed for abjectness and woe,
To grovel on the dunghill of his fears,
To shrink at every sound, to quench the flame
Of natural love in sensualism, to know
That hour as blessed when on his worthless days
The frozen hand of Death shall set its seal,
Yet fear the cure, though hating the disease.
The one is man that shall hereafter be ;
The other, man as vice has made him now.

War is the statesman's game, the priest's delight,
The lawyer's jest, the hired assassin's trade ;
And, to those royal murderers whose mean thrones
Are bought by crimes of treachery and gore,
The bread they eat, the staff on which they lean.
Guards, garbed in blood-red livery, surround
Their palaces, participate the crimes
That force defends, and from a nation's rage
Secure the crown which all the curses reach
That famine, frenzy, woe, and penury, breathe.
These are the hired bravos who defend
The tyrant's throne—the bullies of his fear :
These are the sinks and channels of worst vice,
The refuse of society, the dregs
Of all that is most vile : their cold hearts blend
Deceit with sternness, ignorance with pride,
All that is mean and villanous with rage
Which hopelessness of good and self-contempt
Alone might kindle. They are decked in wealth,
Honour, and power ; then are sent abroad
To do their work. The pestilence that stalks
In gloomy triumph through some eastern land
Is less destroying. They cajole with gold,
And promises of fame, the thoughtless youth
Already crushed with servitude : he knows
His wretchedness too late, and cherishes
Repentance for his ruin, when his doom

Is sealed in gold and blood!
Those too the tyrant serve, who, skilled to snare
The feet of Justice in the toils of law,
Stand ready to oppress the weaker still;
And right or wrong will vindicate for gold,
Sneering at Public Virtue, which beneath
Their pitiless tread lies torn and trampled, where
Honour sits smiling at the sale of truth.

Then grave and hoary-headed hypocrites,
Without a hope, a passion, or a love,
Who, through a life of luxury and lies,
Have crept by flattery to the seats of power,
Support the system whence their honours flow.
They have three words (well tyrants know their use,
Well pay them for the loan, with usury
Torn from a bleeding world)—God, Hell, and Heaven.
A vengeful, pitiless, and almighty fiend,
Whose mercy is a nickname for the rage
Of tameless tigers hungering for blood:
Hell, a red gulf of everlasting fire,
Where poisonous and undying worms prolong
Eternal misery to those hapless slaves
Whose life has been a penance for its crimes:
And Heaven, a meed for those who dare belie
Their human nature, quake, believe, and cringe
Before the mockeries of earthly power.

These tools the tyrant tempers to his work,
Wields in his wrath, and, as he wills, destroys,
Omnipotent in wickedness: the while
Youth springs, age moulders, manhood tamely does
His bidding, bribed by short-lived joys to lend
Force to the weakness of his trembling arm.
They rise, they fall; one generation comes,
Yielding its harvest to destruction's scythe.
It fades, another blossoms: yet behold!
Red glows the tyrant's stamp-mark on its bloom,
Withering and cankering deep its passive prime.
He has invented lying words and modes,
Empty and vain as his own coreless heart;
Evasive meanings, nothings of much sound,

To lure the heedless victim to the toils
Spread round the valley of its paradise.

Look to thyself, priest, conqueror, or prince!
Whether thy trade is falsehood, and thy lusts
Deep wallow in the earnings of the poor,
With whom thy Master was; or thou delight'st
In numbering o'er the myriads of thy slain,
All misery weighing nothing in the scale
Against thy short-lived fame; or thou dost load
With cowardice and crime the groaning land,
A pomp-fed king. Look to thy wretched self!
Ay, art thou not the veriest slave that e'er
Crawled on the loathing earth? Are not thy days
Days of unsatisfying listlessness?
Dost thou not cry, ere night's long rack is o'er,
"When will the morning come?" Is not thy youth
A vain and feverish dream of sensualism?
Thy manhood blighted with unripe disease?
Are not thy views of unregretted death
Drear, comfortless, and horrible? Thy mind,
Is it not morbid as thy nerveless frame,
Incapable of judgment, hope, or love?
And dost thou wish the errors to survive
That bar thee from all sympathies of good,
After the miserable interest
Thou hold'st in their protraction? When the grave
Has swallowed up thy memory and thyself,
Dost thou desire the bane that poisons earth
To twine its roots around thy coffined clay,
Spring from thy bones, and blossom on thy tomb,
That of its fruit thy babes may eat and die?

V.

Thus do the generations of the earth
Go to the grave, and issue from the womb,
Surviving still the imperishable change
That renovates the world. Even as the leaves
Which the keen frost-wind of the waning year
Has scattered on the forest soil, and heaped
For many seasons there, though long they choke
(Loading with loathsome rottenness the land)

All germs of promise, yet, when the tall trees
From which they fell, shorn of their lovely shapes,
Lie level with the earth to moulder there,
They fertilize the land they long deformed,
Till from the breathing lawn a forest springs
Of youth, integrity, and loveliness,
Like that which gave it life, to spring and die :—
Thus suicidal Selfishness, that blights
The fairest feelings of the opening heart,
Is destined to decay, whilst from the soil
Shall spring all virtue, all delight, all love,
And judgment cease to wage unnatural war
With passion's unsubduable array.
Twin-sister of Religion, Selfishness,—
Rival in crime and falsehood, aping all
The wanton horrors of her bloody play ;
Yet frozen, unimpassioned, spiritless,
Shunning the light, and owning not its name ;
Compelled by its deformity to screen
With flimsy veil of justice and of right
Its unattractive lineaments that scare
All save the brood of ignorance ; at once
The cause and the effect of tyranny ;
Unblushing, hardened, sensual, and vile ;
Dead to all love but of its abjectness,
With heart impassive by more noble powers
Than unshared pleasure, sordid gain, or fame :
Despising its own miserable being,
Which still it longs, yet fears, to disenthrall.

Hence commerce springs, the venal interchange
Of all that human art or nature yield ;
Which wealth should purchase not, but want demand,
And natural kindness hasten to supply
From the full fountain of its boundless love,
For ever stifled, drained, and tainted now.
Commerce, beneath whose poison-breathing shade
No solitary virtue dares to spring ;
But Poverty and Wealth with equal hand
Scatter their withering curses, and unfold
The doors of premature and violent death
To pining famine and full-fed disease,

To all that shares the lot of human life;
Which—poisoned, body and soul—scarce drags the chain
That lengthens as it goes, and clanks behind.

Commerce has set the mark of selfishness,
The signet of its all-enslaving power,
Upon a shining ore, and called it gold;
Before whose image bow the vulgar great,
The vainly rich, the miserable proud,
The mob of peasants, nobles, priests, and kings,
And with blind feelings reverence the power
That grinds them to the dust of misery.
But in the temple of their hireling hearts
Gold is a living god, and rules in scorn
All earthly things but virtue.

Since tyrants, by the sale of human life,
Heap luxuries to their sensualism, and fame
To their wide-wasting and insatiate pride,
Success has sanctioned to a credulous world
The ruin, the disgrace, the woe, of war.
His hosts of blind and unresisting dupes
The despot numbers; from his cabinet
These puppets of his schemes he moves at will
(Even as the slaves by force or famine driven
Beneath a vulgar master) to perform
A task of cold and brutal drudgery;—
Hardened to hope, insensible to fear,
Scarce living pulleys of a dead machine,
Mere wheels of work and articles of trade,
That grace the proud and noisy pomp of wealth!

The harmony and happiness of man
Yield to the wealth of nations; that which lifts
His nature to the heaven of its pride
Is bartered for the poison of his soul,
The weight that drags to earth his towering hopes;
Blighting all prospect but of selfish gain,
Withering all passion but of slavish fear,
Extinguishing all free and generous love
Of enterprise and daring. Even the pulse
That fancy kindles in the beating heart

To mingle with sensation, it destroys,—
Leaves nothing but the sordid lust of self,
The grovelling hope of interest and gold,
Unqualified, unmingled, unredeemed
Even by hypocrisy.
And statesmen boast
Of wealth! The wordy eloquence, that lives
After the ruin of their hearts, can gild
The bitter poison of a nation's woe;
Can turn the worship of the servile mob
To their corrupt and glaring idol, Fame,
From Virtue, trampled by its iron tread,—
Although its dazzling pedestal be raised
Amid the horrors of a limb-strewn field,
With desolated dwellings smoking round.
The man of ease, who, by his warm fireside,
To deeds of charitable intercourse,
And bare fulfilment of the common laws
Of decency and prejudice, confines
The struggling nature of his human heart,
Is duped by their cold sophistry; he sheds
A passing tear perchance upon the wreck
Of earthly peace, when near his dwelling's door
The frightful waves are driven,—when his son
Is murdered by the tyrant, or religion
Drives his wife raving mad. But the poor man,
Whose life is misery and fear and care;
Whom the morn wakens but to fruitless toil;
Who ever hears his famished offspring's scream;
Whom their pale mother's uncomplaining gaze
For ever meets, and the proud rich man's eye
Flashing command, and the heart-breaking scene
Of thousands like himself;—he little heeds
The rhetoric of tyranny. His hate
Is quenchless as his wrongs; he laughs to scorn
The vain and bitter mockery of words,
Feeling the horror of the tyrant's deeds,
And unrestrained but by the arm of power,
That knows and dreads his enmity.

The iron rod of Penury still compels
Her wretched slave to bow the knee to wealth,

And poison with unprofitable toil
A life too void of solace, to confirm
The very chains that bind him to his doom.
Nature, impartial in munificence,
Has gifted man with all-subduing will:
Matter, with all its transitory shapes,
Lies subjected and plastic at his feet,
That, weak from bondage, tremble as they tread.
How many a rustic Milton has passed by,
Stifling the speechless longings of his heart,
In unremitting drudgery and care!
How many a vulgar Cato has compelled
His energies, no longer tameless then,
To mould a pin, or fabricate a nail!
How many a Newton, to whose passive ken
Those mighty spheres that gem infinity
Were only specks of tinsel fixed in heaven
To light the midnights of his native town!

Yet every heart contains perfection's germ:
The wisest of the sages of the earth
That ever from the stores of reason drew
Science, and truth, and virtue's dreadless tone,
Were but a weak and inexperienced boy—
Proud, sensual, unimpassioned, unimbued
With pure desire and universal love—
Compared to that high being, of cloudless brain,
Untainted passion, elevated will,
Which Death (who even would linger long in awe
Within his noble presence, and beneath
His changeless eye-beam) might alone subdue.
Him every slave now dragging through the filth
Of some corrupted city his sad life,
Pining with famine, swoln with luxury,
Blunting the keenness of his spiritual sense
With narrow schemings and unworthy cares,
Or madly rushing through all violent crime
To move the deep stagnation of his soul,
Might imitate and equal.

But mean lust
Has bound its chains so tight about the earth
That all within it but the virtuous man

Is venal. Gold or fame will surely reach
The price prefixed by selfishness, to all
But him of resolute and unchanging will;
Whom nor the plaudits of a servile crowd,
Nor the vile joys of tainting luxury,
Can bribe to yield his elevated soul
To Tyranny or Falsehood, though they wield
With blood-red hand the sceptre of the world.

All things are sold. The very light of heaven
Is venal: earth's unsparing gifts of love,
The smallest and most despicable things
That lurk in the abysses of the deep,
All objects of our life, even life itself,
And the poor pittance which the laws allow
Of liberty,—the fellowship of man,
Those duties which his heart of human love
Should urge him to perform instinctively,—
Are bought and sold as in a public mart
Of undisguising Selfishness, that sets
On each its price, the stamp-mark of her reign.
Even love is sold. The solace of all woe
Is turned to deadliest agony: old age
Shivers in selfish beauty's loathing arms,
And youth's corrupted impulses prepare
A life of horror, from the blighting bane
Of commerce; whilst the pestilence that springs
From unenjoying sensualism has filled
All human life with hydra-headed woes.

Falsehood demands but gold to pay the pangs
Of outraged conscience; for the slavish priest
Sets no great value on his hireling faith:
A little passing pomp, some servile souls
Whom cowardice itself might safely chain,
Or the spare mite of avarice could bribe,
To deck the triumph of their languid zeal,
Can make *him* minister to tyranny.
More daring crime requires a loftier meed:
Without a shudder the slave-soldier lends
His arm to murderous deeds, and steels his heart
When the dread eloquence of dying men,

Low mingling on the lonely field of fame,
Assails that nature whose applause he sells
For the gross blessings of the patriot mob,
For the vile gratitude of heartless kings,
And for a cold world's good word,—viler still!

There is a nobler glory which survives
Until our being fades, and, solacing
All human care, accompanies its change;
Deserts not virtue in the dungeon's gloom,
And, in the precincts of the palace, guides
His footsteps through that labyrinth of crime;
Imbues his lineaments with dauntlessness,
Even when from power's avenging hand he takes
Its sweetest, last, and noblest title—death;
—The consciousness of good, which neither gold,
Nor sordid fame, nor hope of heavenly bliss,
Can purchase; but a life of resolute good,
Unalterable will, quenchless desire
Of universal happiness, the heart
That beats with it in unison, the brain
Whose ever-wakeful wisdom toils to change
Reason's rich stores for its eternal weal.

This "commerce" of sincerest virtue needs
No mediative signs of selfishness,
No jealous intercourse of wretched gain,
No balancings of prudence, cold and long:—
In just and equal measure all is weighed;
One scale contains the sum of human weal,
And one, the good man's heart.
How vainly seek
The selfish for that happiness denied
To aught but virtue! Blind and hardened they
Who hope for peace amid the storms of care,
Who covet power they know not how to use,
And sigh for pleasure they refuse to give!
Madly they frustrate still their own designs;
And, where they hope that quiet to enjoy
Which virtue pictures, bitterness of soul,
Pining regrets, and vain repentances,
Disease, disgust, and lassitude, pervade
Their valueless and miserable lives.

But hoary-headed Selfishness has felt
Its death-blow, and is tottering to the grave.
A brighter morn awaits the human day;
When every transfer of earth's natural gifts
Shall be a commerce of good words and works;
When poverty and wealth, the thirst of fame,
The fear of infamy, disease and woe,
War with its million horrors, and fierce hell,
Shall live but in the memory of Time,
Who, like a penitent libertine, shall start,
Look back, and shudder at his younger years.

VI.

ALL touch, all eye, all ear,
The Spirit felt the Fairy's burning speech.
O'er the thin texture of its frame
The varying periods painted changing glows;
As on a summer even,
When soul-enfolding music floats around,
The stainless mirror of the lake
Re-images the eastern gloom,
Mingling convulsively its purple hues
With sunset's burnished gold.

Then thus the Spirit spoke:
"It is a wild and miserable world,
Thorny, and full of care,
Which every fiend can make his prey at will.
O Fairy! in the lapse of years
Is there no hope in store?
Will yon vast suns roll on
Interminably, still illuming
The night of so many wretched souls,
And see no hope for them?
Will not the Universal Spirit e'er
Revivify this withered limb of heaven?"

The Fairy calmly smiled
In comfort, and a kindling gleam of hope
Suffused the Spirit's lineaments.
"Oh! rest thee tranquil; chase those fearful doubts,

Which ne'er could rack an everlasting soul
That sees the chains which bind it to its doom.
Yes! crime and misery are in yonder earth,
Falsehood, mistake, and lust;
But the eternal world
Contains at once the evil and the cure.
Some eminent in virtue shall start up,
Even in perversest time:
The truths of their pure lips, that never die,
Shall bind the scorpion falsehood with a wreath
Of ever-living flame,
Until the monster sting itself to death.

"How sweet a scene will earth become—
Of purest spirits a pure dwelling-place,
Symphonious with the planetary spheres—
When man, with changeless Nature coalescing,
Will undertake regeneration's work!
When its ungenial poles no longer point
To the red and baleful sun
That faintly twinkles there!

"Spirit, on yonder earth
Falsehood now triumphs; deadly Power
Has fixed its seal upon the lip of Truth.
Madness and misery are there:
The happiest is most wretched. Yet confide—
Until pure health-drops from the cup of joy
Fall like a dew of balm upon the world.
Now to the scene I show in silence turn,
And read the blood-stained charter of all woe,
Which Nature soon, with re-creating hand,
Will blot in mercy from the book of earth.
How bold the flight of Passion's wandering wing,
How swift the step of Reason's firmer tread,
How calm and sweet the victories of life,
How terrorless the triumph of the grave,—
How powerless were the mightiest monarch's arm,
Vain his loud threat, and impotent his frown,—
How ludicrous the priest's dogmatic roar,
The weight of his exterminating curse
How light, and his affected charity,

To suit the pressure of the changing times,
What palpable deceit—but for thy aid,
Religion! but for thee, prolific fiend,
Who peoplest earth with demons, hell with men,
And heaven with slaves!

"Thou taintest all thou look'st upon!—The stars
Which on thy cradle beamed so brightly sweet
Were gods to the distempered playfulness
Of thy untutored infancy: the trees,
The grass, the clouds, the mountains, and the sea,
All living things that walk, swim, creep, or fly,
Were gods: the sun had homage, and the moon
Her worshiper. Then thou becam'st, a boy,
More daring in thy frenzies: every shape,
Monstrous or vast or beautifully wild,
Which from sensation's relics fancy culls;
The spirits of the air, the shuddering ghost,
The genii of the elements, the powers
That gave a shape to nature's varied works,
Had life and place in the corrupt belief
Of thy blind heart: yet still thy youthful hands
Were pure of human blood. Then manhood gave
Its strength and ardour to thy frenzied brain.
Thine eager gaze scanned the stupendous scene,
Whose wonders mocked the knowledge of thy pride:
Their everlasting and unchanging laws
Reproached thine ignorance. Awhile thou stood'st
Baffled and gloomy. Then thou didst sum up
The elements of all that thou didst know,—
The changing seasons, winter's leafless reign,
The budding of the heaven-breathing trees,
The eternal orbs that beautify the night,
The sunrise, and the setting of the moon,
Earthquakes and wars, and poisons and disease;
And all their causes to an abstract point
Converging, thou didst bend, and call it God!
The self-sufficing, the omnipotent,
The merciful, and the avenging God,—
Who, prototype of human misrule, sits
High in heaven's realm, upon a golden throne,
Even like an earthly king; and whose dread work,

Hell, gapes for ever for the unhappy slaves
Of fate, whom he created in his sport,
To triumph in their torments when they fell.
Earth heard the name; Earth trembled, as the smoke
Of his revenge ascended up to heaven,
Blotting the constellations; and the cries
Of millions butchered in sweet confidence
And unsuspecting peace, even when the bonds
Of safety were confirmed by wordy oaths
Sworn in his dreadful name, rung through the land;
Whilst innocent babes writhed on thy stubborn spear,
And thou didst laugh to hear the mother's shriek
Of maniac gladness as the sacred steel
Felt cold in her torn entrails!

"Religion! thou wert then in manhood's prime.
But age crept on: one God would not suffice
For senile puerility. Thou framed'st
A tale to suit thy dotage, and to glut
Thy misery-thirsting soul; that the mad fiend
Thy wickedness had pictured might afford
A plea for sating the unnatural thirst
For murder, rapine, violence, and crime,
That still consumed thy being, even when
Thou heard'st the step of Fate; that flames might light
Thy funeral scene, and the shrill horrent shrieks
Of parents dying on the pile that burned
To light their children to thy paths, the roar
Of the encircling flames, the exulting cries
Of thine apostles, loud commingling there,
Might sate thy hungry ear
Even on the bed of death!

"But now contempt is mocking thy grey hairs;
Thou art descending to the darksome grave,
Unhonoured and unpitied but by those
Whose pride is passing by like thine, and sheds,
Like thine, a glare that fades before the sun
Of truth, and shines but in the dreadful night
That long has loured above the ruined world.

"Throughout these infinite orbs of mingling light,

Of which yon earth is one, is wide diffused
A Spirit of activity and life,
That knows no term, cessation, or decay;
That fades not when the lamp of earthly life,
Extinguished in the dampness of the grave,
Awhile there slumbers, more than when the babe
In the dim newness of its being feels
The impulses of sublunary things,
And all is wonder to unpractised sense;
But, active, steadfast, and eternal, still
Guides the fierce whirlwind, in the tempest roars,
Cheers in the day, breathes in the balmy groves,
Strengthens in health, and poisons in disease;
And in the storm of change, that ceaselessly
Rolls round the eternal universe, and shakes
Its undecaying battlement, presides,
Apportioning with irresistible law
The place each spring of its machine shall fill;—
So that, when waves on waves tumultuous heap
Confusion to the clouds, and fiercely driven
Heaven's lightnings scorch the uprooted ocean-fords
(Whilst, to the eye of shipwrecked mariner
Lone sitting on the bare and shuddering rock,
All seems unlinked contingency and chance)
No atom of this turbulence fulfils
A vague and unnecessitated task,
Or acts but as it must and ought to act.
Even the minutest molecule of light
That in an April sunbeam's fleeting glow
Fulfils its destined though invisible work
The universal Spirit guides; nor less,
When merciless ambition or mad zeal
Has led two hosts of dupes to battle-field,
That blind they there may dig each other's graves,
And call the sad work glory, does it rule
All passions. Not a thought, a will, an act,
No working of the tyrant's moody mind,
Nor one misgiving of the slaves who boast
Their servitude, to hide the shame they feel,
Nor the events enchaining every will,
That from the depths of unrecorded time
Have drawn all-influencing virtue, pass

Unrecognized or unforeseen by thee,
Soul of the Universe! eternal spring
Of life and death, of happiness and woe,
Of all that chequers the phantasmal scene
That floats before our eyes in wavering light,
Which gleams but on the darkness of our prison,
Whose chains and massy walls
We feel but cannot see!

"Spirit of Nature! all-sufficing Power!
Necessity, thou mother of the world!
Unlike the God of human error, thou
Requir'st no prayers or praises. The caprice
Of man's weak will belongs no more to thee
Than do the changeful passions of his breast
To thy unvarying harmony. The slave
Whose horrible lusts spread misery o'er the world,
And the good man who lifts with virtuous pride
His being, in the sight of happiness
That springs from his own works; the poison-tree
Beneath whose shade all life is withered up,
And the fair oak whose leafy dome affords
A temple where the vows of happy love
Are registered, are equal in thy sight.
No love, no hate, thou cherishest; revenge,
And favouritism, and worst desire of fame,
Thou know'st not. All that the wide world contains
Are but thy passive instruments, and thou
Regard'st them all with an impartial eye:
Whose joy or pain thy nature cannot feel,
Because thou hast not human sense,
Because thou art not human mind.

"Yes! when the sweeping storm of time
Has sung its death-dirge o'er the ruined fanes
And broken altars of the almighty fiend
Whose name usurps thy honours, and the blood,
Through centuries clotted there, has floated down
The tainted flood of ages, shalt thou live
Unchangeable! A shrine is raised to thee
Which nor the tempest breath of time,
Nor the interminable flood

Over earth's slight pageant rolling,
Availeth to destroy,—
The sensitive extension of the world:
That wondrous and eternal fane
Where pain and pleasure, good and evil, join
To do the will of strong Necessity,—
And life in multitudinous shapes,
Still pressing forward where no term can be,
Like hungry and unresting flame
Curls round the eternal columns of its strength."

VII.

Spirit. I was an infant when my mother went
To see an atheist burned. She took me there.
The dark-robed priests were met around the pile;
The multitude was gazing silently;
And, as the culprit passed with dauntless mien,
Tempered disdain in his unaltering eye,
Mixed with a quiet smile, shone calmly forth.
The thirsty fire crept round his manly limbs;
His resolute eyes were scorched to blindness soon;
His death-pang rent my heart! The insensate mob
Uttered a cry of triumph, and I wept.
"Weep not, child!" cried my mother, "for that man
Has said 'There is no God.'"

Fairy. There *is* no God!
Nature confirms the faith his death-groan sealed.
Let heaven and earth, let man's revolving race,
His ceaseless generations, tell their tale;
Let every part depending on the chain
That links it to the whole point to the hand
That grasps its term! Let every seed that falls,
In silent eloquence, unfold its store
Of argument. Infinity within,
Infinity without, belie creation;
The exterminable spirit it contains
Is nature's only God; but human pride
Is skilful to invent most serious names
To hide its ignorance.
The name of God
Has fenced about all crime with holiness;

Himself the creature of his worshipers;
Whose names and attributes and passions change—
Seeva, Buddh, Foh, Jehovah, God, or Lord—
Even with the human dupes who build his shrines,
Still serving o'er the war-polluted world
For desolation's watch-word: whether hosts
Stain his death-blushing chariot-wheels, as on
Triumphantly they roll whilst Brahmins raise
A sacred hymn to mingle with the groans;
Or countless partners of his power divide
His tyranny to weakness; or the smoke
Of burning towns, the cries of female helplessness,
Unarmed old age, and youth, and infancy,
Horribly massacred, ascend to heaven
In honour of his name; or, last and worst,
Earth groans beneath religion's iron age,
And priests dare babble of a God of peace
Even whilst their hands are red with guiltless blood,—
Murdering the while, uprooting every germ
Of truth, exterminating, spoiling all,
Making the earth a slaughter-house!

O Spirit! through the sense
By which thy inner nature was apprised
Of outward shows, vague dreams have rolled,
And varied reminiscences have waked
Tablets that never fade;
All things have been imprinted there,
The stars, the sea, the earth, the sky,—
Even the unshapeliest lineaments
Of wild and fleeting visions
Have left a record there
To testify of earth.

These are my empire, for to me is given
The wonders of the human world to keep,
And fancy's thin creations to endow
With manner, being, and reality;
Therefore a wondrous phantom, from the dream
Of human error's dense and purblind faith,
I will evoke, to meet thy questioning.
Ahasuerus, rise!

A strange and woe-worn wight
Arose beside the battlement,
And stood unmoving there.
His inessential figure cast no shade
Upon the golden floor;
His port and mien bore mark of many years,
And chronicles of untold ancientness
Were legible within his beamless eye:
Yet his cheek bore the mark of youth;
Freshness and vigour knit his manly frame;
The wisdom of old age was mingled there
With youth's primæval dauntlessness;
And inexpressible woe,
Chastened by fearless resignation, gave
An awful grace to his all-speaking brow.

Spirit. Is there a God?

Ahasuerus. Is there a God?—ay, an almighty God,
And vengeful as almighty! Once his voice
Was heard on earth: earth shuddered at the sound;
The fiery-visaged firmament expressed
Abhorrence; and the grave of nature yawned
To swallow all the dauntless and the good
That dared to hurl defiance at his throne,
Girt as it was with power. None but slaves
Survived,—cold-blooded slaves, who did the work
Of tyrannous omnipotence; whose souls
No honest indignation ever urged
To elevated daring, to one deed
Which gross and sensual self did not pollute.
These slaves built temples for the omnipotent fiend,
Gorgeous and vast: the costly altars smoked
With human blood, and hideous pæans rung
Through all the long-drawn aisles. A murderer heard
His voice in Egypt, one whose gifts and arts
Had raised him to his eminence in power,—
Accomplice of omnipotence in crime,
And confidant of the all-knowing one.
These were Jehovah's words:—

"From an eternity of idleness

I, God, awoke; in seven days' toil made earth
From nothing; rested, and created man.
I placed him in a paradise, and there
Planted the tree of evil; so that he
Might eat and perish, and my soul procure
Wherewith to sate its malice, and to turn,
Even like a heartless conqueror of the earth,
All misery to my fame. The race of men
Chosen to my honour with impunity
May sate the lusts I planted in their heart.
Here I command thee hence to lead them on,
Until, with hardened feet, their conquering troops
Wade on the promised soil through woman's blood,
And make my name be dreaded through the land.
Yet ever-burning flame and ceaseless woe
Shall be the doom of their eternal souls,
With every soul on this ungrateful earth,
Virtuous or vicious, weak or strong,—even all
Shall perish, to fulfil the blind revenge
(Which you, to men, call 'justice') of their God."

The murderer's brow
Quivered with horror.
"God omnipotent,
Is there no mercy? must our punishment
Be endless? will long ages roll away,
And see no term? Oh! wherefore hast thou made
In mockery and wrath this evil earth?
Mercy becomes the powerful—be but just!
O God! repent and save!"
"One way remains.
I will beget a son, and he shall bear
The sins of all the world. He shall arise
In an unnoticed corner of the earth,
And there shall die upon a cross, and purge
The universal crime; so that the few
On whom my grace descends, those who are marked
As vessels to the honour of their God,
May credit this strange sacrifice, and save
Their souls alive. Millions shall live and die
Who ne'er shall call upon their saviour's name,
But unredeemed go to the gaping grave.

Thousands shall deem it an old woman's tale,
Such as the nurses frighten babes withal:
These in a gulf of anguish and of flame
Shall curse their reprobation endlessly;
Yet tenfold pangs shall force them to avow,
Even on their beds of torment where they howl,
My honour, and the justice of their doom.
What then avail their virtuous deeds, their thoughts
Of purity, with radiant genius bright,
Or lit with human reason's earthly ray?
Many are called, but few will I elect.
Do thou my bidding, Moses."

Even the murderer's cheek
Was blanched with horror, and his quivering lips
Scarce faintly uttered—"O almighty one,
I tremble and obey!"

O Spirit! centuries have set their seal
On this heart of many wounds, and loaded brain,
Since the Incarnate came. Humbly he came,
Veiling his horrible Godhead in the shape
Of man, scorned by the world, his name unheard
Save by the rabble of his native town,
Even as a parish demagogue. He led
The crowd; he taught them justice, truth, and peace,
In semblance; but he lit within their souls
The quenchless flames of zeal, and blessed the sword
He brought on earth to satiate with the blood
Of truth and freedom his malignant soul.
At length his mortal frame was led to death.
I stood beside him: on the torturing cross
No pain assailed his unterrestrial sense;
And yet he groaned. Indignantly I summed
The massacres and miseries which his name
Had sanctioned in my country, and I cried
"Go! go!" in mockery.
A smile of godlike malice reillumed
His fading lineaments. "I go," he cried;
"But thou shalt wander o'er the unquiet earth
Eternally."——The dampness of the grave
Bathed my imperishable front. I fell,
And long lay tranced upon the charmèd soil.

When I awoke, hell burned within my brain,
Which staggered on its seat; for all around
The mouldering relics of my kindred lay,
Even as the Almighty's ire arrested them,—
And in their various attitudes of death
My murdered children's mute and eyeless skulls
Glared ghastlily upon me.
But my soul,
From sight and sense of the polluting woe
Of tyranny, had long learned to prefer
Hell's freedom to the servitude of heaven.
Therefore I rose, and dauntlessly began
My lonely and unending pilgrimage;
Resolved to wage unwearіable war
With my almighty tyrant, and to hurl
Defiance at his impotence to harm
Beyond the curse I bore. The very hand
That barred my passage to the peaceful grave
Has crushed the earth to misery, and given
Its empire to the chosen of his slaves.
These have I seen, even from the earliest dawn
Of weak, unstable, and precarious power,
Then preaching peace, as now they practise war;
So, when they turned but from the massacre
Of unoffending infidels, to quench
Their thirst for ruin in the very blood
That flowed in their own veins,—and pitiless zeal
Froze every human feeling, as the wife
Sheathed in her husband's heart the sacred steel,
Even whilst its hopes were dreaming of her love;
And friends to friends, brothers to brothers, stood
Opposed in bloodiest battle-field, and war
(Scarce satiable by fate's last death-draught) waged,
Drunk from the wine-press of the Almighty's wrath;
Whilst the red cross, in mockery of peace,
Pointed to victory! When the fray was done,
No remnant of the exterminated faith
Survived to tell its ruin, but the flesh,
With putrid smoke poisoning the atmosphere,
That rotted on the half-extinguished pile.

Yes! I have seen God's worshipers unsheath

The sword of his revenge, when grace descended,
Confirming all unnatural impulses,
To sanctify their desolating deeds;
And frantic priests waved the ill-omened cross
O'er the unhappy earth: then shone the sun
On showers of gore from the upflashing steel
Of safe assassination, and all crime
Made stingless by the Spirit of the Lord,—
And blood-red rainbows canopied the land.

Spirit! no year of my eventful being
Has passed unstained by crime and misery
Which flows from God's own faith. I've marked his slaves,
With tongues whose lies are venomous, beguile
The insensate mob, and, whilst one hand was red
With murder, feign to stretch the other out
For brotherhood and peace. And that they now
Babble of love and mercy (whilst their deeds
Are marked with all the narrowness and crime
That Freedom's young arm dares not yet chastise)
Reason may claim our gratitude, who now,
Establishing the imperishable throne
Of truth and stubborn virtue, maketh vain
The unprevailing malice of my foe;
Whose bootless rage heaps torments for the brave,
Adds impotent eternities to pain,
Whilst keenest disappointment racks his breast
To see the smiles of peace around them play,
To frustrate or to sanctify their doom.

Thus have I stood,—through a wild waste of years
Struggling with whirlwinds of mad agony,
Yet peaceful and serene and self-enshrined,
Mocking my powerless tyrant's horrible curse
With stubborn and unalterable will;
Even as a giant oak, which heaven's fierce flame
Had scathèd in the wilderness, to stand
A monument of fadeless ruin there,—
Yet peacefully and movelessly it braves
The midnight conflict of the wintry storm,
  As in the sunlight's calm it spreads
  Its worn and withered arms on high
To meet the quiet of a summer's noon.

The Fairy waved her wand:
Ahasuerus fled
Fast as the shapes of mingled shade and mist
That lurk in the glens of a twilight grove
Flee from the morning beam:
The matter of which dreams are made
Not more endowed with actual life
Than this phantasmal portraiture
Of wandering human thought.

VIII.

"THE Present and the Past thou hast beheld:
It was a desolate sight. Now, Spirit, learn,
The secrets of the Future.—Time!
Unfold the brooding pinion of thy gloom,
Render thou up thy half-devourèd babes,
And from the cradles of eternity,
Where millions lie lulled to their portioned sleep
By the deep murmuring stream of passing things,
Tear thou that gloomy shroud.—Spirit, behold
Thy glorious destiny!"

Joy to the Spirit came.
Through the wide rent in Time's eternal veil,
Hope was seen beaming through the mists of fear.
Earth was no longer hell;
Love, freedom, health, had given
Their ripeness to the manhood of its prime,
And all its pulses beat
Symphonious to the planetary spheres:
Then dulcet music swelled
Concordant with the life-strings of the soul;
It throbbed in sweet and languid beatings there,
Catching new life from transitory death.—
Like the vague sighings of a wind at even,
That wakes the wavelets of the slumbering sea,
And dies on the creation of its breath,
And sinks and rises, fails and swells, by fits,
Was the pure stream of feeling
That sprang from these sweet notes,
And o'er the Spirit's human sympathies
With mild and gentle motion calmly flowed.

Joy to the Spirit came,—
Such joy as when a lover sees
The chosen of his soul in happiness,
And witnesses her peace
Whose woe to him were bitterer than death;
Sees her unfaded cheek
Glow mantling in first luxury of health,
Thrills with her lovely eyes,
Which like two stars amid the heaving main
Sparkle through liquid bliss.

Then in her triumph spoke the Fairy Queen.
"I will not call the ghost of ages gone
To unfold the frightful secrets of its lore.
The present now is past;
And those events that desolate the earth
Have faded from the memory of Time,
Who dares not give reality to that
Whose being I annul. To me is given
The wonders of the human world to keep,
Space, matter, time, and mind. Futurity
Exposes now its treasure; let the sight
Renew and strengthen all thy failing hope.
O human Spirit! spur thee to the goal
Where virtue fixes universal peace,
And 'midst the ebb and flow of human things
Shows somewhat stable, somewhat certain still,
A light-house o'er the wild of dreary waves.

"The habitable earth is full of bliss.
Those wastes of frozen billows that were hurled
By everlasting snow-storms round the poles,
Where matter dared not vegetate nor live,
But ceaseless frost round the vast solitude
Bound its broad zone of stillness, are unloosed;
And fragrant zephyrs there from spicy isles.
Ruffle the placid ocean-deep, that rolls
Its broad bright surges to the sloping sand,
Whose roar is wakened into echoings sweet
To murmur through the heaven-breathing groves,
And melodize with man's blessed nature there.

"Those deserts of immeasurable sand

Whose age-collected fervours scarce allowed
A bird to live, a blade of grass to spring,
Where the shrill chirp of the green lizard's love
Broke on the sultry silentness alone,
Now teem with countless rills and shady woods,
Cornfields and pastures and white cottages.
And where the startled wilderness beheld
A savage conqueror stained in kindred blood,
A tigress sating with the flesh of lambs
The unnatural famine of her toothless cubs,
While shouts and howlings through the desert rang,—
Sloping and smooth the daisy-spangled lawn,
Offering sweet incense to the sunrise, smiles
To see a babe before his mother's door
Sharing his morning's meal
With the green and golden basilisk
That comes to lick his feet.

"Those trackless deeps where many a weary sail
Has seen above the illimitable plain
Morning on night, and night on morning, rise,
Whilst still no land to greet the wanderer spread
Its shadowy mountains on the sun-bright sea,
Where the loud roarings of the tempest-waves
So long have mingled with the gusty wind
In melancholy loneliness, and swept
The desert of those ocean solitudes
But vocal to the sea-bird's harrowing shriek,
The bellowing monster, and the rushing storm,
Now to the sweet and many-mingling sounds
Of kindliest human impulses respond.
Those lonely realms bright garden-isles begem,
With lightsome clouds and shining seas between,
And fertile valleys resonant with bliss,
Whilst green woods overcanopy the wave,
Which like a toil-worn labourer leaps to shore,
To meet the kisses of the flowerets there.

"All things are re-created, and the flame
Of consentaneous love inspires all life.
The fertile bosom of the Earth gives suck
To myriads, who still grow beneath her care

Rewarding her with their pure perfectness.
The balmy breathings of the wind inhale
Her virtues, and diffuse them all abroad:
Health floats amid the gentle atmosphere,
Glows in the fruits, and mantles on the stream.
No storms deform the beaming brow of heaven,
Nor scatter in the freshness of its pride
The foliage of the ever-verdant trees;
But fruits are ever ripe, flowers ever fair;
And Autumn proudly bears her matron grace,
Kindling a flush on the fair cheek of Spring,
Whose virgin bloom beneath the ruddy fruit
Reflects its tint, and blushes into love.
The buds unfold more brightly, till no more
Or frost or shower or change of seasons mars
The freshness of their amaranthine leaves.

"The lion now forgets to thirst for blood:
There might you see him sporting in the sun
Beside the dreadless kid; his claws are sheathed,
His teeth are harmless, custom's force has made
His nature as the nature of a lamb.
Like passion's fruit, the nightshade's tempting bane
Poisons no more the pleasure it bestows.
All bitterness is past; the cup of joy
Unmingled mantles to the goblet's brim,
And courts the thirsty lips it fled before.

"But chief, ambiguous man,—he that can know
More misery, and dream more joy, than all;
Whose keen sensations thrill within his breast
To mingle with a loftier instinct there,
Lending their power to pleasure and to pain,
Yet raising, sharpening, and refining, each;
Who stands amid the ever-varying world,
The burthen or the glory of the earth;
He chief perceives the change: his being notes
The gradual renovation, and defines
Each movement of its progress on his mind.

"Man—where the gloom of the long polar night
Lours o'er the snow-clad rocks and frozen soil,

Where scarce the hardiest herb that braves the frost
Basks in the moonlight's ineffectual glow—
Shrank with the plants, and darkened with the night;
His chilled and narrow energies, his heart
Insensible to courage, truth, or love,
His stunted stature and imbecile frame,
Marked him for some abortion of the earth,
Fit compeer of the bears that roamed around,
Whose habits and enjoyments were his own:
His life a feverish dream of stagnant woe,
Whose meagre wants, but scantily fulfilled,
Apprised him ever of the joyless length
Which his short being's wretchedness had reached;
His death a pang which famine, cold, and toil,
Long on the mind, whilst yet the vital spark
Clung to the body stubbornly, had brought.
All was inflicted here that Earth's revenge
Could wreak on the infringers of her law;
One curse alone was spared—the name of God.

"Nor where the tropics bound the realms of day
With a broad belt of mingling cloud and flame,
Where blue mists through the unmoving atmosphere
Scattered the seeds of pestilence, and fed
Unnatural vegetation, where the land
Teemed with all earthquake, tempest, and disease,
Was man a nobler being. Slavery
Had crushed him to his country's blood-stained dust;
Or he was bartered for the fame of power,
Which, all internal impulses destroying,
Makes human will an article of trade;
Or he was changed with Christians for their gold,
And dragged to distant isles, where, to the sound
Of the flesh-mangling scourge, he does the work
Of all-polluting luxury and wealth,
Which doubly visits on the tyrants' heads
The long-protracted fullness of their woe;
Or he was led to legal butchery,
To turn to worms beneath that burning sun
Where kings first leagued against the rights of men,
And priests first traded with the name of God.

"Even where the milder zone afforded man

A seeming shelter, yet contagion there,
Blighting his being with unnumbered ills,
Spread like a quenchless fire; nor truth till late
Availed to arrest its progress, or create
That peace which first in bloodless victory waved
Her snowy standard o'er this favoured clime.
There man was long the train-bearer of slaves,
The mimic of surrounding misery,
The jackal of ambition's lion-rage,
The bloodhound of religion's hungry zeal.

"Here now the human being stands adorning
This loveliest earth with taintless body and mind;
Blessed from his birth with all bland impulses,
Which gently in his noble bosom wake
All kindly passions and all pure desires.
Him (still from hope to hope the bliss pursuing
Which from the exhaustless store of human weal
Dawns on the virtuous mind) the thoughts that rise
In time-destroying infiniteness gift
With self-enshrined eternity, that mocks
The unprevailing hoariness of age;
And man, once fleeting o'er the transient scene
Swift as an unremembered vision, stands
Immortal upon earth. No longer now
He slays the lamb that looks him in the face,
And horribly devours his mangled flesh,
Which, still avenging nature's broken law,
Kindled all putrid humours in his frame,
All evil passions, and all vain belief,
Hatred, despair, and loathing, in his mind,
The germs of misery, death, disease, and crime.
No longer now the winged habitants
That in the woods their sweet lives sing away
Flee from the form of man; but gather round,
And prune their sunny feathers on the hands
Which little children stretch in friendly sport
Towards these dreadless partners of their play.
All things are void of terror. Man has lost
His terrible prerogative, and stands
An equal amidst equals. Happiness
And science dawn, though late, upon the earth;

Peace cheers the mind, health renovates the frame;
Disease and pleasure cease to mingle here,
Reason and passion cease to combat there;
Whilst each unfettered o'er the earth extends
Its all-subduing energies, and wields
The sceptre of a vast dominion there;
Whilst every shape and mode of matter lends
Its force to the omnipotence of mind,
Which from its dark mine drags the gem of truth
To decorate its paradise of peace.

IX.

"O HAPPY Earth! reality of Heaven!
To which those restless souls that ceaselessly
Throng through the human universe aspire!
Thou consummation of all mortal hope!
Thou glorious prize of blindly-working will,
Whose rays, diffused throughout all space and time,
Verge to one point, and blend for ever there!
Of purest spirits thou pure dwelling-place,
Where care and sorrow, impotence and crime,
Languor, disease, and ignorance, dare not come!
O happy Earth, reality of Heaven!

"Genius has seen thee in her passionate dreams;
And dim forebodings of thy loveliness,
Haunting the human heart, have there entwined
Those rooted hopes of some sweet place of bliss
Where friends and lovers meet to part no more.
Thou art the end of all desire and will,
The product of all action; and the souls
That by the paths of an aspiring change
Have reached thy haven of perpetual peace
There rest from the eternity of toil
That framed the fabric of thy perfectness.

"Even Time, the conqueror, fled thee in his fear;
That hoary giant who in lonely pride
So long had ruled the world that nations fell
Beneath his silent footstep. Pyramids,
That for millenniums had withstood the tide
Of human things, his storm-breath drove in sand

Across that desert where their stones survived
The name of him whose pride had heaped them there.
Yon monarch, in his solitary pomp,
Was but the mushroom of a summer day
That *his* light-winged footstep pressed to dust:
Time was the king of earth: all things gave way
Before him, but the fixed and virtuous will,
The sacred sympathies of soul and sense,
That mocked his fury, and prepared his fall.

"Yet slow and gradual dawned the morn of love;
Long lay the clouds of darkness o'er the scene,
Till from its native heaven they rolled away.
First, Crime triumphant o'er all hope careered,
Unblushing, undisguising, bold and strong;
Whilst Falsehood, tricked in Virtue's attributes,
Long sanctified all deeds of vice and woe,
Till, done by her own venomous sting to death,
She left the moral world without a law,—
No longer fettering Passion's fearless wing,
Nor searing Reason with the brand of God.
Then steadily the happy ferment worked;
Reason was free; and, wild though Passion went
Through tangled glens and wood-embosomed meads,
Gathering a garland of the strangest flowers,
Yet, like the bee returning to her queen,
She bound the sweetest on her sister's brow,
Who, meek and sober, kissed the sportive child
No longer trembling at the broken rod.

"Mild was the slow necessity of death:
The tranquil spirit failed beneath its grasp,
Without a groan, almost without a fear,—
Calm as a voyager to some distant land,
And full of wonder, full of hope, as he.
The deadly germs of languor and disease
Died in the human frame, and purity
Blessed with all gifts her earthly worshipers.
How vigorous then the athletic form of age!
How clear its open and unwrinkled brow,
Where neither avarice, cunning, pride, nor care,
Had stamped the seal of grey deformity

On all the mingling lineaments of time!
How lovely the intrepid front of youth
Which meek-eyed courage decked with freshest grace!
Courage of soul that dreaded not a name,
And elevated will that journeyed on
Through life's phantasmal scene in fearlessness,
With virtue, love, and pleasure, hand in hand.
Then, that sweet bondage which is freedom's self,
And rivets with sensation's softest tie
The kindred sympathies of human souls,
Needed no fetters of tyrannic law.
Those delicate and timid impulses
In nature's primal modesty arose,
And with undoubting confidence disclosed
The growing longings of its dawning love,
Unchecked by dull and selfish chastity,
That virtue of the cheaply virtuous
Who pride themselves in senselessness and frost.
No longer prostitution's venomed bane
Poisoned the springs of happiness and life.
Woman and man, in confidence and love,
Equal and free and pure, together trod
The mountain-paths of virtue, which no more
Were stained with blood from many a pilgrim's feet.

"Then where through distant ages long in pride
The palace of the monarch-slave had mocked
Famine's faint groan and penury's silent tear,
A heap of crumbling ruins stood, and threw
Year after year their stones upon the field,
Wakening a lonely echo; and the leaves
Of the old thorn, that on the topmost tower
Usurped the royal ensign's grandeur, shook
In the stern storm that swayed the topmost tower,
And whispered strange tales in the whirlwind's ear.
Low through the lone cathedral's roofless aisles
The melancholy winds a death-dirge sung.
It were a sight of awfulness to see
The works of faith and slavery, so vast,
So sumptuous, yet so perishing withal,—
Even as the corpse that rests beneath its wall.
A thousand mourners deck the pomp of death

To-day, the breathing marble glows above
To decorate its memory, and tongues
Are busy of its life: to-morrow, worms
In silence and in darkness seize their prey.

"Within the massy prison's mouldering courts,
Fearless and free the ruddy children played,
Weaving gay chaplets for their innocent brows
With the green ivy and the red wall-flower
That mock the dungeon's unavailing gloom.
The ponderous chains, and gratings of strong iron,
There rusted amid heaps of broken stone
That mingled slowly with their native earth:
There the broad beam of day, which feebly once
Lighted the cheek of lean captivity
With a pale and sickly glare, then freely shone
On the pure smiles of infant playfulness.
No more the shuddering voice of hoarse despair
Pealed through the echoing vaults; but soothing notes
Of ivy-fingered winds and gladsome birds
And merriment were resonant around.
These ruins soon left not a wreck behind:
Their elements, wide scattered o'er the globe,
To happier shapes were moulded, and became
Ministrant to all blissful impulses.
Thus human things were perfected; and earth,
Even as a child beneath its mother's love,
Was strengthened in all excellence, and grew
Fairer and nobler with each passing year.

"Now Time his dusky pennons o'er the scene
Closes in steadfast darkness, and the future
Fades from our charmèd sight. My task is done:
Thy lore is learned. Earth's wonders are thine own,
With all the fear and all the hope they bring.
My spells are past: the present now recurs.
Ah me! a pathless wilderness remains
Yet unsubdued by man's reclaiming hand.

"Yet, human Spirit, bravely hold thy course.
Let virtue teach thee firmly to pursue
The gradual paths of an aspiring change:

For birth and life and death, and that strange state
Before the naked soul has found its home,
All tend to perfect happiness, and urge
The restless wheels of being on their way,
Whose flashing spokes, instinct with infinite life,
Bicker and burn to gain their destined goal.
For birth but wakes the spirit to the sense
Of outward shows, whose unexperienced shape
New modes of passion to its frame may lend;
Life is its state of action, and the store
Of all events is aggregated there
That variegate the eternal universe;
Death is a gate of dreariness and gloom,
That leads to azure isles and beaming skies,
And happy regions of eternal hope.
Therefore, O Spirit! fearlessly bear on:
Though storms may break the primrose on its stalk,
Though frosts may blight the freshness of its bloom,
Yet Spring's awakening breath will woo the earth
To feed with kindliest dews its favourite flower,
That blooms in mossy banks and darksome glens,
Lighting the greenwood with its sunny smile.

"Fear not then, Spirit, Death's disrobing hand—
So welcome when the tyrant is awake,
So welcome when the bigot's hell-torch burns;
'Tis but the voyage of a darksome hour,
The transient gulf-dream of a startling sleep.
Death is no foe to virtue: earth has seen
Love's brightest roses on the scaffold bloom,
Mingling with freedom's fadeless laurels there,
And presaging the truth of visioned bliss.—
Are there not hopes within thee which this scene
Of linked and gradual being has confirmed—
Whose stingings bade thy heart look further still,
When, to the moonlight walk by Henry led,
Sweetly and sadly thou didst talk of death?
And wilt thou rudely tear them from thy breast,
Listening supinely to a bigot's creed,
Or tamely crouching to the tyrant's rod,
Whose iron thongs are red with human gore?
Never: but, bravely bearing on, thy will

Is destined an eternal war to wage
With tyranny and falsehood, and uproot
The germs of misery from the human heart.
Thine is the hand whose piety would soothe
The thorny pillow of unhappy crime
(Whose impotence an easy pardon gains),
Watching its wanderings as a friend's disease:
Thine is the brow whose mildness would defy
Its fiercest rage, and brave its sternest will,
When fenced by power, and master of the world.
Thou art sincere and good; of resolute mind,
Free from heart-withering custom's cold control,
Of passion lofty, pure, and unsubdued.
Earth's pride and meanness could not vanquish thee;
And therefore art thou worthy of the boon
Which thou hast now received. Virtue shall keep
Thy footsteps in the path that thou hast trod,
And many days of beaming hope shall bless
Thy spotless life of sweet and sacred love.
Go, happy one! and give that bosom joy
Whose sleepless spirit waits to catch
Light, life, and rapture, from thy smile."

The Fairy waves her wand of charm.
Speechless with bliss, the Spirit mounts the car,
That rolled beside the battlement,—
Bending her beamy eyes in thankfulness.
Again the enchanted steeds were yoked,
Again the burning wheels inflame
The steep descent of heaven's untrodden way.
Fast and far the chariot flew.
The vast and fiery globes that rolled
Around the Fairy's palace-gate
Lessened by slow degrees, and soon appeared
Such tiny twinklers as the planet orbs
That there attendant on the solar power
With borrowed light pursued their narrower way.

Earth floated then below.
The chariot paused a moment there;
The Spirit then descended.
The restless coursers pawed the ungenial soil,

Snuffed the gross air, and then, their errand done,
Unfurled their pinions to the winds of heaven.

The Body and the Soul united then.
A gentle start convulsed Ianthe's frame;
Her veiny eyelids quietly unclosed.
Moveless awhile the dark blue orbs remained:
She looked around in wonder—and beheld
Henry, who kneeled in silence by her couch,
Watching her sleep with looks of speechless love,
And the bright beaming stars
That through the casement shone.

SHELLEY'S NOTES TO QUEEN MAB.

P. 7.

The sun's unclouded orb
Rolled through the black concave.

Beyond our atmosphere the sun would appear a rayless orb of fire in the midst of a black concave. The equal diffusion of its light on earth is owing to the refraction of the rays by the atmosphere, and their reflection from other bodies. Light consists either of vibrations propagated through a subtle medium, or of numerous minute particles repelled in all directions from the luminous body. Its velocity greatly exceeds that of any substance with which we are acquainted: observations on the eclipses of Jupiter's satellites have demonstrated that light takes up no more than 8′ 7″ in passing from the sun to the earth, a distance of 95,000,000 miles.—Some idea may be gained of the immense distance of the fixed stars, when it is computed that many years would elapse before light could reach this earth from the nearest of them; yet in one year light travels 5,422,400,000,000 miles, which is a distance, 5,707,600 times greater than that of the sun from the earth.

P. 8.

Whilst round the chariot's way
Innumerable systems rolled.

The plurality of worlds—the indefinite immensity of the universe—is a most awful subject of contemplation. He who rightly feels its mystery and grandeur is in no danger of seduction from the falsehoods of religious systems, or of deifying the principle of the universe. It is impossible to believe that the Spirit that pervades this infinite machine begat a son upon the body of a Jewish woman, or is angered at the consequences of that Necessity which is a synonym of itself. All that miserable tale of the Devil, and Eve, and an Intercessor, with the childish mummeries of the God of the Jews, is irreconcileable with the knowledge of the stars. The works of his fingers have borne witness against him.

The nearest of the fixed stars is inconceivably distant from the earth, and they are probably proportionably distant from each other. By a calculation of the velocity of light, Syrius is supposed to be at least 54,224,000,000,000 miles from the earth.* That which appears only like a thin and silvery cloud streaking the heaven is in effect

* See *Nicholson's Encyclopedia*, art. Light.

composed of innumerable clusters of suns, each shining with its own light, and illuminating numbers of planets that revolve around them. Millions and millions of suns are ranged around us, all attended by innumerable worlds, yet calm, regular, and harmonious, all keeping the paths of immutable necessity.

P. 25.

These are the hired bravos who defend
The tyrant's throne.

To employ murder as a means of justice is an idea which a man of an enlightened mind will not dwell upon with pleasure. To march forth in rank and file, and all the pomp of streamers and trumpets, for the purpose of shooting at our fellow-men as a mark; to inflict upon them all the variety of wound and anguish; to leave them weltering in their blood; to wander over the field of desolation, and count the number of the dying and the dead,—are employments which in thesis we may maintain to be necessary, but which no good man will contemplate with gratulation and delight. A battle, we suppose, is won:—thus truth is established, thus the cause of justice is confirmed! It surely requires no common sagacity to discern the connexion between this immense heap of calamities and the assertion of truth or the maintenance of justice.

"Kings and ministers of state, the real authors of the calamity, sit unmolested in their cabinet, while those against whom the fury of the storm is directed are, for the most part, persons who have been trepanned into the service, or who are dragged unwillingly from their peaceful homes into the field of battle. A soldier is a man whose business it is to kill those who never offended him, and who are the innocent martyrs of other men's iniquities. Whatever may become of the abstract question of the justifiableness of war, it seems impossible that the soldier should not be a depraved and unnatural being.

"To these more serious and momentous considerations it may be proper to add a recollection of the ridiculousness of the military character. Its first constituent is obedience; a soldier is, of all descriptions of men, the most completely a machine: yet his profession inevitably teaches him something of dogmatism, swaggering, and self-consequence. He is like the puppet of a showman, who, at the very time he is made to strut and swell, and display the most farcical airs, we perfectly know cannot assume the most insignificant gesture, advance either to the right or the left, but as he is moved by his exhibitor."—*Godwin's Enquirer, Book II., Essay V.*

I will here subjoin a little poem so strongly expressive of my abhorrence of despotism and falsehood that I fear lest it never again may be depictured so vividly. This opportunity is perhaps the only one that ever will occur of rescuing it from oblivion.

FALSEHOOD AND VICE.

A DIALOGUE.

WHILST monarchs laughed upon their thrones
To hear a famished nation's groans,
And hugged the wealth wrung from the woe
That makes its eyes and veins o'erflow—
(Those thrones high built upon the heaps
Of bones where frenzied Famine sleeps,
Where Slavery wields her scourge of iron
Red with mankind's unheeded gore,
And war's mad fiends the scene environ,
Mingling with shrieks a drunken roar)—
There Vice and Falsehood took their stand,
High raised above the unhappy land.

FALSEHOOD.

Brother! arise from the dainty fare
Which thousands have toiled and bled to bestow;
A finer feast for thy hungry ear
Is the news that I bring of human woe.

VICE.

And, secret one! what hast thou done
To compare, in thy tumid pride, with me?
I whose career through the blasted year
Has been tracked by despair and agony!

FALSEHOOD.

What have I done?—I have torn the robe
From baby Truth's unsheltered form,
And round the desolated globe
Borne safely the bewildering charm:
My tyrant-slaves to a dungeon-floor
Have bound the fearless innocent,
And streams of fertilizing gore
Flow from her bosom's hideous rent,
Which this unfailing dagger gave . . .
I dread that blood!—no more!—This day
Is ours, though her eternal ray
Must shine upon our grave.
Yet know, proud Vice, had I not given
To thee the robe I stole from heaven,
Thy shape of ugliness and fear
Had never gained admission here.

VICE.

And know that, had I disdained to toil,
But sate in my loathsome cave the while,
And ne'er to these hateful sons of heaven
Gold, monarchy, and murder, given;
Hadst thou with all thine art essayed
One of thy games then to have played,
With all thine overweening boast,
Falsehood, I tell thee thou hadst lost!—
Yet wherefore this dispute?—we tend,
Fraternal, to one common end;
In this cold grave beneath my feet
Will our hopes, our fears, and our labours,
meet.

FALSEHOOD.

I brought my daughter, Religion, on earth:
She smothered Reason's babes in their birth,
But dreaded their mother's eye severe,—
So the crocodile slunk off slily in fear,
And loosed her bloodhounds from the den.—
They started from dreams of slaughtered men,
And, by the light of her poison-eye,
Did her work o'er the wide earth frightfully.
The dreadful stench of her torches' flare,
Fed with human fat, polluted the air:
The curses, the shrieks, the ceaseless cries
Of the many mingling miseries,
As on she trod, ascended high
And trumpeted my victory!—
Brother, tell what thou hast done.

VICE.

I have extinguished the noonday sun
In the carnage-smoke of battles won.
Famine, murder, hell, and power,
Were glutted in that glorious hour,
Which searchless fate had stamped for me
With the seal of her security;
For the bloated wretch on yonder throne
Commanded the bloody fray to rise—
Like me, he joyed at the stifled moan
Wrung from a nation's miseries;
While the snakes whose slime even him defiled
In ecstasies of malice smiled.
They thought 'twas theirs,—but mine the deed!
Theirs is the toil, but mine the meed.
Ten thousand victims madly bleed.
They dream that tyrants goad them there
With poisonous war to taint the air.
These tyrants, on their beds of thorn,
Swell with the thoughts of murderous fame,
And with their gains to lift my name,
Restless, they plan from night to morn:
I—I do all; without my aid,
Thy daughter, that relentless maid,
Could never o'er a deathbed urge
The fury of her venomed scourge.

FALSEHOOD.

Brother, well!—the world is ours;
And whether thou or I have won,
The pestilence expectant lours
On all beneath yon blasted sun.
Our joys, our toils, our honours, meet
In the milk-white and wormy winding-sheet.
A short-lived hope, unceasing care,
Some heartless scraps of godly prayer,
A moody curse, and a frenzied sleep,
Ere gapes the grave's unclosing deep,
A tyrant's dream, a coward's start,
That ice that clings to a priestly heart,
A judge's frown, a courtier's smile,
Make the great whole for which we toil.
And, brother, whether thou or I
Have done the work of misery,
It little boots. Thy toil and pain,
Without my aid, were more than vain:
And but for thee I ne'er had sate
The guardian of heaven's palace-gate.

P. 27.

Thus do the generations of the earth
Go to the grave, and issue from the womb.

"One generation passeth away, and another generation cometh, but the earth abideth for ever. The sun also ariseth, and the sun goeth down, and hasteth to his place where he arose. The wind goeth toward the south, and turneth about unto the north; it whirleth about continually, and the wind returneth again according to his circuits. All the rivers run into the sea, yet the sea is not full: unto the place from whence the rivers come, thither they return again."—*Ecclesiastes*, chap. i.

P. 27.

Even as the leaves
Which the keen frost-wind of the waning year
Has scattered on the forest soil.

Οἵη περ φύλλων γενεὴ, τοιήδε καὶ ἀνδρῶν.
Φύλλα τὰ μέν τ' ἄνεμος χαμάδις χέει, ἄλλα δέ θ' ὕλη
Τηλεθόωσα φύει: ἔαρος δ' ἐπιγίγνεται ὥρη.
Ὣς ἀνδρῶν γενεὴ, ἡ μὲν φύει, ἣδ' ἀπολήγει.
ΙΛΙΑΔ. Ζ'. l. 146.

P. 29.

The mob of peasants, nobles, priests, and kings.

"Suave, mari magno turbantibus æquora ventis,
E terrâ magnum alterius spectare laborem:
Non quia vexari quemquam 'st jocunda voluptas,
Sed quibus ipse malis careas, quia cernere suave 'st.
Per campos instructa, tuâ sine parte pericli,
Suave etiam belli certamina magna tueri:
Sed nil dulcius est bene quam munita tenere,
Edita doctrinâ sapientum templa serenâ;
Despicere unde queas alios, passimque videre
Errare, atque viam palanteis quærere vitæ;
Certare ingenio; contendere nobilitate,
Nocteis atque dies niti præstante labore,
Ad summas emergere opes, rerumque potiri.
O miseras hominum menteis! O pectora cæca!"
Lucret., lib. ii.

P. 30.

And statesmen boast
Of wealth!

There is no real wealth but the labour of man. Were the mountains of gold and the valleys of silver, the world would not be one grain of corn the richer; no one comfort would be added to the human race. In consequence of our consideration for the precious metals, one man is enabled to heap to himself luxuries at the expense of the necessaries of his neighbour; a system admirably fitted to produce all the varieties of disease and crime which never fail to characterize the two extremes of opulence and penury. A speculator takes pride to himself as the promoter of his country's prosperity, who employs a number of hands in the manufacture of articles avowedly destitute of use, or subservient only to the unhallowed cravings of luxury and ostentation. The nobleman who employs the peasants of his neighbourhood in building his palaces until "*jam pauca aratro jugera regiæ moles relinquent,*" flatters himself that he has gained the title of a patriot by yielding to the impulses of vanity. The show and pomp of courts adduce the same apology for their continuance; and many a fête has been given, many a woman has eclipsed her beauty by her dress, to benefit the labouring poor and to encourage trade. Who does not see that this is a remedy which aggravates, whilst it palliates, the countless diseases of society? The poor are set to labour,—for what? Not the food for which they famish: not the blankets for want of which their babes are frozen by the cold of their miserable hovels: not those comforts of civilization without which civilized man is far more miserable than the meanest savage, oppressed as he is by all its insidious evils, within the daily and taunting prospect of its innumerable benefits assiduously exhibited before him:—no; for the pride of power, for the miserable isolation of pride, for the false pleasures of the hundredth part of society. No greater evidence is afforded of the wide-extended and radical mistakes of civilized man than this fact: those arts which are essential to his very being are held in the greatest contempt; employments

are lucrative in an inverse ratio to their usefulness.* The jeweller, the toyman, the actor, gains fame and wealth by the exercise of his useless and ridiculous art; whilst the cultivator of the earth, he without whom society must cease to subsist, struggles through contempt and penury, and perishes by that famine which, but for his unceasing exertion, would annihilate the rest of mankind.

I will not insult common sense by insisting on the doctrine of the natural equality of man. The question is not concerning its desirableness, but its practicability; so far as it is practicable, it is desirable. That state of human society which approaches nearer to an equal partition of its benefits and evils should, *cæteris paribus*, be preferred; but so long as we conceive that a wanton expenditure of human labour, not for the necessities, not even for the luxuries, of the mass of society, but for the egotism and ostentation of a few of its members, is defensible on the ground of public justice, so long we neglect to approximate to the redemption of the human race.

Labour is required for physical, and leisure for moral, improvement: from the former of these advantages the rich, and from the latter the poor, by the inevitable conditions of their respective situations, are precluded. A state which should combine the advantages of both would be subjected to the evils of neither. He that is deficient in firm health, or vigorous intellect, is but half a man; hence it follows that to subject the labouring classes to unnecessary labour is wantonly to deprive them of any opportunities of intellectual improvement; and that the rich are heaping up for their own mischief the disease, lassitude, and ennui, by which their existence is rendered an intolerable burden.

English reformers exclaim against sinecures,—but the true pension list is the rent-roll of the landed proprietors; wealth is a power usurped by the few, to compel the many to labour for their benefit. The laws which support this system derive their force from the ignorance and credulity of its victims: they are the result of a conspiracy of the few against the many,—who are themselves obliged to purchase this pre-eminence by the loss of all real comfort.

"The commodities that substantially contribute to the subsistence of the human species form a very short catalogue: they demand from us but a slender portion of industry. If these only were produced, and sufficiently produced, the species of man would be continued. If the labour necessarily required to produce them were equitably divided among the poor, and still more if it were equitably divided among all, each man's share of labour would be light, and his portion of leisure would be ample. There was a time when this leisure would have been of small comparative value: it is to be hoped that the time will come when it will be applied to the most important purposes. Those hours which are not required for the production of the necessaries of life may be devoted to the cultivation of the understanding, the enlarging our stock of knowledge, the refining our taste, and thus open to us new and more exquisite sources of enjoyment. . . . . It was perhaps necessary that a period of monopoly and oppression should subsist, before a period of cultivated equality could subsist. Savages perhaps would never have been excited to the discovery of truth, and the invention of art, but by the narrow motives which such a period affords. But surely, after the savage state has ceased, and men have set out in the glorious career of discovery and invention, monopoly and oppression cannot be necessary to prevent them from returning to a state of barbarism."—*Godwin's Enquirer, Essay II. See also Pol. Jus., book* viii. *chap. II.*

It is a calculation of this admirable author that all the conveniences of civilized life might be produced, if society would divide the labour equally among its members, by each individual being employed in labour two hours during the day.

* See Rousseau, *De l'Inégalité parmi les Hommes*, note 7.

P. 30.

Or religion
Drives his wife raving mad.

I am acquainted with a lady of considerable accomplishments, and the mother of a numerous family, whom the Christian religion has goaded to incurable insanity. A parallel case is, I believe, within the experience of every physician.

"Nam jam sæpe homines patriam carosque parentes
Prodiderunt, vitare Acherusia templa petentes."

Lucretius.

P. 32.

Even love is sold.

Not even the intercourse of the sexes is exempt from the despotism of positive institution. Law pretends even to govern the indisciplinable wanderings of passion, to put fetters on the clearest deductions of reason, and, by appeals to the will, to subdue the involuntary affections of our nature. Love is inevitably consequent upon the perception of loveliness. Love withers under constraint: its very essence is liberty: it is compatible neither with obedience, jealousy, nor fear: it is there most pure, perfect, and unlimited, where its votaries live in confidence, equality, and unreserve.

How long then ought the sexual connexion to last? what law ought to specify the extent of the grievances which should limit its duration? A husband and wife ought to continue so long united as they love each other: any law which should bind them to cohabitation for one moment after the decay of their affection would be a most intolerable tyranny, and the most unworthy of toleration. How odious a usurpation of the right of private judgment should that law be considered which should make the ties of friendship indissoluble, in spite of the caprices, the inconstancy, the fallibility, and capacity for improvement, of the human mind! And by so much would the fetters of love be heavier and more unendurable than those of friendship as love is more vehement and capricious, more dependent on those delicate peculiarities of imagination, and less capable of reduction to the ostensible merits of the object.

The state of society in which we exist is a mixture of feudal savageness and imperfect civilization. The narrow and unenlightened morality of the Christian religion is an aggravation of these evils. It is not even until lately that mankind have admitted that happiness is the sole end of the science of ethics, as of all other sciences; and that the fanatical idea of mortifying the flesh for the love of God has been discarded. I have heard, indeed, an ignorant collegian adduce, in favour of Christianity, its hostility to every worldly feeling! *

But, if happiness be the object of morality, of all human unions and disunions; if the worthiness of every action is to be estimated by the quantity of pleasurable sensation it is calculated to produce; then the connexion of the sexes is so long sacred as it contributes to the comfort of the parties, and is naturally dissolved when its evils are greater than its benefits. There is nothing immoral in this separation. Constancy has nothing virtuous in itself, independently of the pleasure it confers; and partakes of the temporizing spirit of vice in proportion as it endures tamely moral defects of magnitude in the object of its indiscreet choice. Love is free: to promise for ever to love the same woman is not less absurd than to promise to believe the same creed: such a vow, in both cases, excludes us from all enquiry. The language of the votarist

* The first Christian emperor made a law by which seduction was punished with death: if the female pleaded her own consent, she also was punished with death; if the parents endeavoured to screen the criminals, they were banished and their estates confiscated; the slaves who might be accessory were burned alive, or forced to swallow melted lead. The very offspring of an illegal love were involved in the consequences of the sentence.—*Gibbon's Decline and Fall, &c.*, vol. ii. page 210. See also, for the hatred of the primitive Christians to love, and even marriage, page 269.

is this: "The woman I now love may be infinitely inferior to many others; the creed I now profess may be a mass of errors and absurdities; but I exclude myself from all future information as to the amiability of the one and the truth of the other, resolving blindly, and in spite of conviction, to adhere to them." Is this the language of delicacy and reason? Is the love of such a frigid heart of more worth than its belief?

The present system of constraint does no more, in the majority of instances, than make hypocrites or open enemies. Persons of delicacy and virtue, unhappily united to those whom they find it impossible to love, spend the loveliest season of their life in unproductive efforts to appear otherwise than they are, for the sake of the feelings of their partner, or the welfare of their mutual offspring: those of less generosity and refinement openly avow their disappointment, and linger out the remnant of that union which only death can dissolve, in a state of incurable bickering and hostility. The early education of the children takes its colour from the squabbles of the parents; they are nursed in a systematic school of ill-humour, violence, and falsehood. Had they been suffered to part at the moment when indifference rendered their union irksome, they would have been spared many years of misery; they would have connected themselves more suitably, and would have found that happiness in the society of more congenial partners which is for ever denied them by the despotism of marriage. They would have been separately useful and happy members of society who, whilst united, were miserable, and rendered misanthropical by misery. The conviction that wedlock is indissoluble holds out the strongest of all temptations to the perverse: they indulge without restraint in acrimony, and all the little tyrannies of domestic life, when they know that their victim is without appeal. If this connexion were put on a rational basis, each would be assured that habitual ill temper would terminate in separation, and would check this vicious and dangerous propensity.

Prostitution is the legitimate offspring of marriage and its accompanying errors. Women, for no other crime than having followed the dictates of a natural appetite, are driven with fury from the comforts and sympathies of society. It is less venial than murder: and the punishment which is inflicted on her who destroys her child to escape reproach is lighter than the life of agony and disease to which the prostitute is irrecoverably doomed. Has a woman obeyed the impulse of unerring nature?—society declares war against her, pitiless and eternal war: she must be the tame slave, she must make no reprisals; theirs is the right of persecution, hers the duty of endurance. She lives a life of infamy: the loud and bitter laugh of scorn scares her from all return. She dies of long and lingering disease; yet *she* is in fault, *she* is the criminal, *she* the froward and untameable child,—and society, forsooth, the pure and virtuous matron who casts her as an abortion from her undefiled bosom! Society avenges herself on the criminals of her own creation; she is employed in anathematizing the vice to-day which yesterday she was the most zealous to teach. Thus is formed one-tenth of the population of London. Meanwhile the evil is twofold. Young men, excluded by the fanatical idea of chastity from the society of modest and accomplished women, associate with these vicious and miserable beings,—destroying thereby all those exquisite and delicate sensibilities whose existence cold-hearted worldlings have denied; annihilating all genuine passion, and debasing that to a selfish feeling which is the excess of generosity and devotedness. Their body and mind alike crumble into a hideous wreck of humanity; idiotcy and disease become perpetuated in their miserable offspring, and distant generations suffer for the bigoted morality of their forefathers. Chastity is a monkish and evangelical superstition, a greater foe to natural temperance even than unintellectual sensuality; it strikes at the root of all domestic happiness, and consigns more than half the human race to misery, that some few may monopolize according to law. A system could not well have been devised more studiously hostile to human happiness than marriage.

I conceive that, from the abolition of marriage, the fit and natural arrangement of sexual connexion would result. I by no means assert that the intercourse would be promiscuous: on the contrary, it appears, from the relation of parent to child, that this union is generally of long duration, and marked above all others with generosity and self-devotion. But this is a subject which it is perhaps premature to discuss. That which will result from the abolition of marriage will be natural and right, because choice and change will be exempted from restraint.

In fact, religion and morality, as they now stand, compose a practical code of misery and servitude: the genius of human happiness must tear every leaf from the accursed book of God, ere man can read the inscription on his heart. How would morality, dressed up in stiff stays and finery, start from her own disgusting image should she look in the mirror of nature!

P. 35.

To the red and baleful sun
That faintly twinkles there.

The north polar star: to which the axis of the earth, in its present state of obliquity, points. It is exceedingly probable, from many considerations, that this obliquity will gradually diminish, until the equator coincides with the ecliptic: the nights and days will then become equal on the earth throughout the year, and probably the seasons also. There is no great extravagance in presuming that the progress of the perpendicularity of the poles may be as rapid as the progress of intellect; or that there should be a perfect identity between the moral and physical improvement of the human species. It is certain that wisdom is not compatible with disease, and that, in the present state of the climates of the earth, health, in the true and comprehensive sense of the word, is out of the reach of civilized man. Astronomy teaches us that the earth is now in its progress, and that the poles are every year becoming more and more perpendicular to the ecliptic. The strong evidence afforded by the history of mythology and geological researches that some event of this nature has taken place already affords a strong presumption that this progress is not merely an oscillation, as has been surmised by some late astronomers.* Bones of animals peculiar to the torrid zone have been found in the north of Siberia, and on the banks of the river Ohio. Plants have been found in the fossil state in the interior of Germany, which demand the present climate of Hindostan for their production.† The researches of M. Bailly‡ establish the existence of a people who inhabited a tract in Tartary, 49° north latitude, of greater antiquity than either the Indians, the Chinese, or the Chaldeans, from whom these nations derived their sciences and theology. We find from the testimony of ancient writers that Britain, Germany, and France, were much colder than at present, and that their great rivers were annually frozen over. Astronomy teaches us also that since this period the obliquity of the earth's position has been considerably diminished.

P. 38.

No atom of this turbulence fulfils
A vague and unnecessitated task,
Or acts but as it must and ought to act.

"Deux exemples serviront à nous rendre plus sensible le principe qui vient d'être posé: nous emprunterons l'un du physique, et l'autre du moral. Dans un tourbillon de poussière qu'élève un vent impétueux, quelque confus qu'il paraisse à nos yeux: dans la plus affreuse tempête excitée par des vents opposés qui soulèvent les flots: il n'y a pas une seule molécule de poussière ou d'eau qui soit placée au *hasard*, qui

* Laplace, *Système du Monde.*
† Cabanis, *Rapports du Physique et du Moral de l'Homme*, vol. ii. page 406.
‡ *Lettres sur les Sciences, à Voltaire.*—Bailly.

n'ait sa cause suffisante pour occuper le lieu où elle se trouve, et qui n'agisse rigoureusement de la manière dont elle doit agir. Un géomètre qui connaîtrait exactement les différentes forces qui agissent dans ces deux cas, et les propriétés des molécules qui sont mues, démontrerait que d'après les causes données chaque molécule agit précisément comme elle doit agir, et ne peut agir autrement qu'elle ne fait.

"Dans les convulsions terribles qui agitent quelquefois les societés politiques, et qui produisent souvent le renversement d'un empire, il n'y a pas une seule action, une seule parole, une seule pensée, une seule volonté, une seule passion, dans les agens qui concourent à la révolution comme destructeurs ou comme victimes, qui ne soit nécessaire, qui n'agisse comme elle doit agir, qui n'opère infailliblement les effets qu'elle doit opérer, suivant la place qu'occupent ces agens dans ce tourbillon moral. Cela paraîtrait évident pour une intelligence qui serait en état de saisir et d'apprécier toutes les actions et réactions des esprits et des corps de ceux qui contribuent à cette révolution."—*Système de la Nature*, vol. i. page 44.

P. 39.

Necessity, thou mother of the world!

He who asserts the doctrine of Necessity means that, contemplating the events which compose the moral and material universe, he beholds only an immense and uninterrupted chain of causes and effects, no one of which could occupy any other place than it does occupy, or act in any other way than it does act. The idea of necessity is obtained by our experience of the connexion between objects, the uniformity of the operations of nature, the constant conjunction of similar events, and the consequent inference of one from the other. Mankind are therefore agreed in the admission of necessity, if they admit that these two circumstances take place in voluntary action. Motive is, to voluntary action in the human mind, what cause is to effect in the material universe. The word liberty, as applied to mind, is analogous to the word chance as applied to matter: they spring from an ignorance of the certainty of the conjunction of antecedents and consequents.

Every human being is irresistibly impelled to act precisely as he does act: in the eternity which preceded his birth a chain of causes was generated, which, operating under the name of motives, make it impossible that any thought of his mind, or any action of his life, should be otherwise than it is. Were the doctrine of Necessity false, the human mind would no longer be a legitimate object of science. From like causes it would be in vain that we should expect like effects; the strongest motive would no longer be paramount over the conduct; all knowledge would be vague and undeterminate; we could not predict with any certainty that we might not meet as an enemy to-morrow him from whom we have parted in friendship to-night; the most probable inducements and the clearest reasonings would lose the invariable influence they possess. The contrary of this is demonstrably the fact. Similar circumstances produce invariably similar effects. The precise character and motives of any man on any occasion being given, the moral philosopher could predict his actions with as much certainty as the natural philosopher could predict the effects of the mixture of any particular chemical substances. Why is the aged husbandman more experienced than the young beginner? Because there is a uniform, undeniable necessity in the operations of the material universe. Why is the old statesman more skilful than the raw politician? Because, relying on the necessary conjunction of motive and action, he proceeds to produce moral effects by the application of those moral causes which experience has shown to be effectual. Some actions may be found to which we can attach no motives, but these are the effects of causes with which we are unacquainted. Hence the relation which motive bears to voluntary action is that of cause to effect; nor, placed in this point of view, is it, or ever has it been, the subject of popular or philosophical dispute. None but the few fanatics who are engaged in the herculean task of reconciling the justice of their God with the misery of man will longer outrage

common sense by the supposition of an event without a cause, a voluntary action without a motive. History, politics, morals, criticism, all grounds of reasoning, all principles of science, alike assume the truth of the doctrine of Necessity. No farmer carrying his corn to market doubts the sale of it at the market price. The master of a manufactory no more doubts that he can purchase the human labour necessary for his purposes than that his machines will act as they have been accustomed to act.

But, whilst none have scrupled to admit necessity as influencing matter, many have disputed its dominion over mind. Independent of its militating with the received ideas of the justice of God, it is by no means obvious to a superficial enquiry. When the mind observes its own operations, it feels no connexion of motive and action: but, as we know "nothing more of causation than the constant conjunction of objects, and the consequent inference of one from the other, as we find that these two circumstances are universally allowed to have place in voluntary action, we may be easily led to own that they are subjected to the necessity common to all causes." The actions of the will have a regular conjunction with circumstances and characters: motive is, to voluntary action, what cause is to effect. But the only idea that we can form of causation is a constant conjunction of similar objects, and the consequent inference of one from the other: wherever this is the case, necessity is clearly established.

The idea of liberty, applied metaphorically to the will, has sprung from a misconception of the meaning of the word power. What is power?—*id quod potest*, that which can produce any given effect. To deny power is to say that nothing can or has the power to be or act. In the only true sense of the word power, it applies with equal force to the lodestone as to the human will. "Do you think these motives which I shall present are powerful enough to rouse him?" is a question just as common as "Do you think this lever has the power of raising this weight?" The advocates of free-will assert that the will has the power of refusing to be determined by the strongest motive. But the strongest motive is that which, overcoming all others, ultimately prevails; this assertion therefore amounts to a denial of the will being ultimately determined by that motive which does determine it,—which is absurd. But it is equally certain that a man cannot resist the strongest motive as that he cannot overcome a physical impossibility.

The doctrine of Necessity tends to introduce a great change into the established notions of morality, and utterly to destroy religion. Reward and punishment must be considered, by the Necessarian, merely as motives which he would employ in order to procure the adoption or abandonment of any given line of conduct. Desert, in the present sense of the word, would no longer have any meaning; and he who should inflict pain upon another for no better reason than that he deserved it would only gratify his revenge under pretence of satisfying justice. "It is not enough," says the advocate of free-will, "that a criminal should be prevented from a repetition of his crime; he should feel pain; and his torments, when justly inflicted, ought precisely to be proportioned to his fault." But utility is morality; that which is incapable of producing happiness is useless; and, though the crime of Damiens must be condemned, yet the frightful torments which revenge, under the name of justice, inflicted on this unhappy man, cannot be supposed to have augmented, even at the long-run, the stock of pleasurable sensation in the world. At the same time, the doctrine of Necessity does not in the least diminish our disapprobation of vice. The conviction which all feel that a viper is a poisonous animal, and that a tiger is constrained by the inevitable condition of his existence to devour men, does not induce us to avoid them less sedulously, or, even more, to hesitate in destroying them: but he would surely be of a hard heart who, meeting with a serpent on a desert island, or in a situation where it was incapable of injury, should wantonly deprive it of existence. A Necessarian is inconsequent to his own principles if he indulges in

hatred or contempt; the compassion which he feels for the criminal is unmixed with a desire of injuring him. He looks with an elevated and dreadless composure upon the links of the universal chain as they pass before his eyes; whilst cowardice, curiosity, and inconsistency, only assail him in proportion to the feebleness and indistinctness with which he has perceived and rejected the delusions of free-will.

Religion is the perception of the relation in which we stand to the principle of the universe. But, if the principle of the universe be not an organic being, the model and prototype of man, the relation between it and human beings is absolutely none. Without some insight into its will respecting our actions, religion is nugatory and vain. But will is only a mode of animal mind; moral qualities also are such as only a human being can possess; to attribute them to the principle of the universe is to annex to it properties incompatible with any possible definition of its nature. It is probable that the word God was originally only an expression denoting the unknown cause of the known events which men perceived in the universe. By the vulgar mistake of a metaphor for a real being, of a word for a thing, it became a man, endowed with human qualities, and governing the universe as an earthly monarch governs his kingdom. Their addresses to this imaginary being, indeed, are much in the same style as those of subjects to a king. They acknowledge his benevolence, deprecate his anger, and supplicate his favour.

But the doctrine of Necessity teaches us that in no case could any event have happened otherwise than it did happen; and that, if God is the author of good, he is also the author of evil; that, if he is entitled to our gratitude for the one, he is entitled to our hatred for the other; that, admitting the existence of this hypothetic being, *he* is also subjected to the dominion of an immutable necessity. It is plain that the same arguments which prove that God is the author of food, light, and life, prove him also to be the author of poison, darkness, and death. The wide-wasting earthquake, the storm, the battle, and the tyranny, are attributable to this hypothetic being, in the same degree as the fairest forms of nature, sunshine, liberty, and peace.

But we are taught, by the doctrine of Necessity, that there is neither good nor evil in the universe, otherwise than as the events to which we apply these epithets have relation to our own peculiar mode of being. Still less than with the hypothesis of a God will the doctrine of Necessity accord with the belief of a future state of punishment. God made man such as he is, and then damned him for being so: for to say that God was the author of all good, and man the author of all evil, is to say that one man made a straight line and a crooked one, and another man made the incongruity.

A Mahometan story, much to the present purpose, is recorded, wherein Adam and Moses are introduced disputing before God in the following manner. "Thou," says Moses, "art Adam, whom God created, and animated with the breath of life, and caused to be worshiped by the angels, and placed in paradise, from whence mankind have been expelled for thy fault." Whereto Adam answered: "Thou art Moses, whom God chose for his apostle, and entrusted with his word, by giving thee the tables of the law, and whom he vouchsafed to admit to discourse with himself. How many years dost thou find the law was written before I was created?" Says Moses "Forty." "And dost thou not find," replied Adam, "these words therein, 'and Adam rebelled against his Lord, and transgressed'?" Which Moses confessing, "Dost thou therefore blame me," continued he, "for doing that which God wrote of me that I should do, forty years before I was created; nay, for what was decreed concerning me fifty thousand years before the creation of heaven and earth?"—SALE'S *Prelim. Disc. to the Koran*, page 164.

P. 40.

There is no God!

This negation must be understood solely to affect a creative Deity. The hypothesis of a pervading Spirit, coeternal with the universe, remains unshaken.

A close examination of the validity of the proofs adduced to support any proposition is the only secure way of attaining truth, on the advantages of which it is unnecessary to descant: our knowledge of the existence of a Deity is a subject of such importance that it cannot be too minutely investigated; in consequence of this conviction, we proceed briefly and impartially to examine the proofs which have been adduced. It is necessary first to consider the nature of belief.

When a proposition is offered to the mind, it perceives the agreement or disagreement of the ideas of which it is composed. A perception of their agreement is termed *belief*. Many obstacles frequently prevent this perception from being immediate; these the mind attempts to remove, in order that the perception may be distinct. The mind is active in the investigation, in order to perfect the state of perception of the relation which the component ideas of the proposition bear to each other, which is passive. The investigation being confused with the perception has induced many falsely to imagine that the mind is active in belief,—that belief is an act of volition,—in consequence of which it may be regulated by the mind. Pursuing, continuing this mistake, they have attached a degree of criminality to disbelief; of which, in its nature, it is incapable: it is equally incapable of merit.

Belief, then, is a passion, the strength of which, like every other passion, is in precise proportion to the degrees of excitement.

The degrees of excitement are three.

The senses are the sources of all knowlege to the mind; consequently their evidence claims the strongest assent.

The decision of the mind, founded upon our own experience derived from these sources, claims the next degree.

The experience of others, which addresses itself to the former one, occupies the lowest degree.

(A graduated scale, on which should be marked the capabilities of propositions to approach the test of the senses, would be a just barometer of the belief which ought to be attached to them.)

Consequently, no testimony can be admitted which is contrary to reason; reason is founded on the evidence of our senses.

Every proof may be referred to one of these three divisions: it is to be considered what arguments we receive from each of them, which should convince us of the existence of a Deity.

1st. The evidence of the senses. If the Deity should appear to us, if he should convince our senses of his existence, this revelation would necessarily command belief. Those to whom the Deity has thus appeared have the strongest possible conviction of his existence. But the God of theologians is incapable of local visibility.

2nd. Reason. It is urged that man knows that whatever is must either have had a beginning, or have existed from all eternity: he also knows that whatever is not eternal must have had a cause. When this reasoning is applied to the universe, it is necessary to prove that it was created: until that is clearly demonstrated, we may reasonably suppose that it has endured from all eternity. We must prove design before we can infer a designer. The only idea which we can form of causation is derivable from the constant conjunction of objects, and the consequent inference of one from the other. In a case where two propositions are diametrically opposite, the mind believes that which is least incomprehensible;—It is easier to suppose that the universe has existed from all eternity than to conceive a being beyond its limits capable of creating it. If the mind sinks beneath the weight of one, is it an alleviation to increase the intolerability of the burthen?

The other argument, which is founded on a man's knowledge of his own existence, stands thus. A man knows not only that he now is, but that once he was not; consequently there must have been a cause. But our idea of causation is alone derivable from the constant conjunction of objects, and the consequent inference of one from

the other; and, reasoning experimentally, we can only infer, from effects, causes exactly adequate to those effects. But there certainly is a generative power which is effected by certain instruments: we cannot prove that it is inherent in these instruments; nor is the contrary hypothesis capable of demonstration. We admit that the generative power is incomprehensible; but to suppose that the same effect is produced by an eternal, omniscient, omnipotent being, leaves the cause in the same obscurity, but renders it more incomprehensible.

3rd. Testimony. It is required that testimony should not be contrary to reason. The testimony that the Deity convinces the senses of men of his existence can only be admitted by us if our mind considers it less probable that these men should have been deceived than that the Deity should have appeared to them. Our reason can never admit the testimony of men who not only declare that they were eye-witnesses of miracles, but that the Deity was irrational; for he commanded that he should be believed, he proposed the highest rewards for faith, eternal punishments for disbelief. We can only command voluntary actions; belief is not an act of volition; the mind is even passive, or involuntarily active. From this it is evident that we have no sufficient testimony, or rather that testimony is insufficient, to prove the being of a God. It has been before shown that it cannot be deduced from reason. They alone, then, who have been convinced by the evidence of the senses, can believe it.

Hence it is evident that, having no proofs from any of the three sources of conviction, the mind *cannot* believe the existence of a creative God: it is also evident that, as belief is a passion of the mind, no degree of criminality is attachable to disbelief; and that they only are reprehensible who neglect to remove the false medium through which their mind views any subject of discussion. Every reflecting mind must acknowledge that there is no proof of the existence of a Deity.

God is an hypothesis, and, as such, stands in need of proof; the *onus probandi* rests on the theist. Sir Isaac Newton says: "Hypotheses non fingo, quicquid enim ex phænomenis non deducitur hypothesis vocanda est, et hypotheses vel metaphysicæ, vel physicæ, vel qualitatum occultarum, seu mechanicæ, in philosophiâ locum non habent." To all proofs of the existence of a creative God apply this valuable rule. We see a variety of bodies possessing a variety of powers; we merely know their effects; we are in a state of ignorance with respect to their essences and causes. These Newton calls the phenomena of things; but the pride of philosophy is unwilling to admit its ignorance of their causes. From the phenomena, which are the objects of our senses, we attempt to infer a cause, which we call God, and gratuitously endow it with all negative and contradictory qualities. From this hypothesis we invent this general name, to conceal our ignorance of causes and essences. The being called God by no means answers with the conditions prescribed by Newton; it bears every mark of a veil woven by philosophical conceit, to hide the ignorance of philosophers even from themselves. They borrow the threads of its texture from the anthropomorphism of the vulgar. Words have been used by sophists for the same purposes; from the occult qualities of the Peripatetics, to the *effluvium* of Boyle, and the *crinities* or *nebulæ* of Herschel. God is represented as infinite, eternal, incomprehensible; he is contained under every *prædicate in non* that the logic of ignorance could fabricate. Even his worshipers allow that it is impossible to form any idea of him; they exclaim with the French poet,

"Pour dire ce qu'il est, il faut être lui-même."[F]

Lord Bacon says that "atheism leaves to man reason, philosophy, natural piety, laws, reputation, and every thing that can serve to conduct him to virtue; but superstition destroys all these, and erects itself into a tyranny over the understandings of men: hence atheism never disturbs the government, but renders man more clear-sighted, since he sees nothing beyond the boundaries of the present life."—BACON'S *Moral Essays.*

"La première théologie de l'homme lui fit d'abord craindre et adorer les éléments mêmes, des objets matériels et grossiers ; il rendit ensuite ses hommages à des agents présidents aux éléments, à des génies inférieurs, à des héros, ou à des hommes doués de grandes qualités. A force de réfléchir, il crut simplifier les choses en soumettant la nature entière à un seul agent, à un esprit, à une âme universelle, qui mettait cette nature et ses parties en mouvement. En remontant de causes en causes, les mortels ont fini par ne rien voir ; et c'est dans cette obscurité qu'ils ont placé leur Dieu ; c'est dans cet abime ténébreux que leur imagination inquiète travaille toujours à se fabriquer des chimères, qui les affligeront jusqu'à ce que la connaissance de la nature les détrompe des fantômes qu'ils ont toujours si vainement adorés.

"Si nous voulons nous rendre compte de nos idées sur la Divinité, nous serons obligés de convenir que, par le mot *Dieu*, les hommes n'ont jamais pu désigner que la cause la plus cachée, la plus éloignée, la plus inconnue, des effets qu'ils voyaient. Ils ne font usage de ce mot que lorsque le jeu des causes naturelles et connues cesse d'être visible pour eux. Dès qu'ils perdent le fil de ces causes, ou dès que leur esprit ne peut plus en suivre la chaine, ils tranchent leur difficulté, et terminent leurs recherches en appellant Dieu la dernière des causes, c'est-à-dire celle que est au-delà de toutes les causes qu'ils connaissent : ainsi ils ne font qu'assigner une dénomination vague à une cause ignorée, à laquelle leur paresse ou les bornes de leurs connaissances les forcent de s'arrêter. Toutes les fois qu'on nous dit que Dieu est l'auteur de quelque phénomène, cela signifie qu'on ignore comment un tel phénomène a pu s'opérer par le secours des forces ou des causes que nous connaissons dans la nature. C'est ainsi que le commun des hommes, dont l'ignorance est le partage, attribue à la Divinité non seulement les effets inusités qui les frappent, mais encore les évènemens les plus simples, dont les causes sont les plus faciles à connaitre pour quiconque a pu les méditer. En un mot, l'homme a toujours respecté les causes inconnues des effets surprenans que son ignorance l'empêchait de démêler. Ce fut sur les débris de la nature que les hommes élevèrent le colosse imaginaire de la Divinité.

"Si l'ignorance de la nature donna la naissance aux dieux, la connaissance de la nature est faite pour les détruire. A mesure que l'homme s'instruit, ses forces et ses ressources augmentent avec ses lumières; les sciences, les arts conservateurs, l'industrie, lui fournissent des secours ; l'expérience le rassure ou lui procure des moyens de résister aux efforts de bien des causes qui cessent de l'allarmer dès qu'il les a connues. En un mot, ses terreurs se dissipent dans la même proportion que son esprit s'éclaire. L'homme instruit cesse d'être superstitieux.

"Ce n'est jamais que sur parole que des peuples entiers adorent le Dieu de leurs pères èt de leurs prêtres : l'autorité, la confiance, la soumission, et l'habitude, leur tiennent lieu de conviction et de preuves. Ils se prosternent et prient, parce que leurs pères leur ont appris à se prosterner et prier : mais pourquoi ceux-ci se sont-ils mis à genoux ? C'est que dans les temps éloignés leurs législateurs et leurs guides leur en ont fait un devoir. 'Adorez et croyez,' ont-ils dit, 'des dieux que vous ne pouvez comprendre ; rapportez-vous-en à notre sagesse profonde ; nous en savons plus que vous sur la Divinité.' 'Mais pourquoi m'en rapporterais-je à vous ?' 'C'est que Dieu le veut ainsi, c'est que Dieu vous punira si vous osez résister.' 'Mais ce Dieu n'est-il donc pas la chose en question ?' Cependant les hommes se sont toujours payés de ce cercle vicieux ; la paresse de leur esprit leur fit trouver plus court de s'en rapporter au jugement des autres. Toutes les notions religieuses sont fondées uniquement sur l'autorité. Toutes les religions du monde défendent l'examen, et ne veulent pas que l'on raisonne. C'est l'autorité qui veut qu'on croie en Dieu ; ce Dieu n'est lui-même fondé que sur l'autorité de quelques hommes qui prétendent le connaitre, et venir de sa part pour l'annoncer à la terre. Un Dieu fait par les hommes a sans doute besoin des hommes pour se faire connaitre aux hommes.

"Ne serait-ce donc que pour des prêtres, des inspirés, des métaphysiciens, que serait réservée la conviction de l'existence d'un Dieu, que l'on dit néanmoins si néces-

saire à tout le genre humain? Mais trouvons-nous de l'harmonie entre les opinions théologiques des différens inspirés, ou des penseurs répandus sur la terre? Ceux même qui font profession d'adorer le même Dieu sont-ils d'accord sur son compte? Sont-ils contents des preuves que leurs collègues apportent de son existence? Souscrivent-ils unanimement aux idées qu'ils présentent sur sa nature, sur sa conduite, sur la façon d'entendre ses prétendus oracles? Est-il une contrée sur la terre où la science de Dieu se soit réellement perfectionnée? A-t-elle pris quelque part la consistance et l'uniformité que nous voyons prendre aux connaissances humaines, aux arts les plus futiles, aux métiers les plus méprisés? Ces mots d'*esprit*, d'*immatérialité*, de *création*, de *prédestination*, de *grâce*; cette foule de distinctions subtiles dont la théologie s'est partout remplie dans quelques pays; ces inventions si ingénieuses, imaginées par des penseurs qui se sont succédés depuis tant de siècles; n'ont fait, hélas! qu'embrouiller les choses, et jamais la science la plus nécessaire aux hommes n'a jusqu'ici pu acquérir la moindre fixité. Depuis des milliers d'années ces rêveurs oisifs se sont perpétuellement relayés pour méditer la Divinité, pour deviner ses voies cachées, pour inventer des hypothèses propres à développer cette énigme importante. Leur peu de succès n'a point découragé la vanité théologique. Toujours on a parlé de Dieu: on s'est égorgé pour lui; et cet être sublime demeure toujours le plus ignoré et le plus discuté.

"Les hommes auraient été trop heureux si, se bornant aux objets visibles qui les intéressent, ils eussent employé, à perfectionner leurs sciences réelles, leurs lois, leur morale, leur éducation, la moitié des efforts qu'ils ont mis dans leurs recherches sur la Divinité. Ils auraient été bien plus sages encore, et plus fortunés, s'ils eussent pu consentir à laisser leurs guides désœuvrés se quereller entre eux, et sonder des profondeurs capables de les étourdir, sans se mêler de leurs disputes insensées. Mais il est de l'essence de l'ignorance d'attacher de l'importance à ce qu'elle ne comprend pas. La vanité humaine fait que l'esprit se roidit contre les difficultés. Plus un objet se dérobe à nos yeux, plus nous faisons d'efforts pour le saisir, parceque dès-lors il aiguillonne notre orgueil, il excite notre curiosité, il nous paraît intéressant. En combattant pour son Dieu, chacun ne combattit en effet que pour les intérêts de sa propre vanité, qui, de toutes les passions produites par la mal-organisation de la société, est la plus prompte à s'allarmer, et la plus propre à produire de très-grandes folies.

"Si, écartant pour un moment les idées fâcheuses que la théologie nous donne d'un Dieu capricieux, dont les décrets partiaux et despotiques décident du sort des humains, nous ne voulons fixer nos yeux que sur la bonté prétendue que tous les hommes, même en tremblant devant ce Dieu, s'accordent à lui donner; si nous lui supposons le projet qu'on lui prête de n'avoir travaillé que pour sa propre gloire; d'exiger les hommages des êtres intelligens; de ne chercher dans ses œuvres que le bien-être du genre humain; comment concilier ses vues et ses dispositions avec l'ignorance vraiment invincible dans laquelle ce Dieu, si glorieux et si bon, laisse la plupart des hommes sur son compte? Si Dieu veut être connu, chéri, remercié, que ne se montre-t-il sous des traits favorables à tous ces êtres intelligens dont il veut être aimé et adoré? Pourquoi ne point se manifester à toute la terre d'une façon non équivoque, bien plus capable de nous convaincre que ces révélations particulières qui semblent accuser la Divinité d'une partialité fâcheuse pour quelques-unes de ses créatures? Le Tout-Puissant n'aurait-il donc pas des moyens plus convainquans de se montrer aux hommes que ces métamorphoses ridicules, ces incarnations prétendues, qui nous sont attestées par des écrivains si peu d'accord entre eux dans les récits qu'ils en font? Au lieu de tant de miracles inventés pour prouver la mission divine de tant de législateurs révérés par les différens peuples du monde, le souverain des esprits ne pouvait-il pas convaincre tout d'un coup l'esprit humain des choses qu'il a voulu lui faire connaître? Au lieu de suspendre un soleil dans la voûte du firmament; au lieu de répandre sans ordre les étoiles et les constellations qui remplissent l'espace, n'eut-il pas été plus conforme aux vues d'un Dieu jaloux de sa gloire et si bien-intentionné

pour l'homme, d'écrire, d'une façon non sujette à dispute, son nom, ses attributs, ses volontés permanentes, en caractères ineffaçables, et lisibles également pour tous les habitans de la terre? Personne alors n'aurait pu douter de l'existence d'un Dieu, de ses volontés claires, de ses intentions visibles. Sous les yeux de ce Dieu si terrible, personne n'aurait eu l'audace de violer ses ordonnances; nul mortel n'eût eu le front d'en imposer en son nom, ou d'interpréter ses volontés suivant ses propres fantaisies.

"En effet, quand même on admettrait l'existence du Dieu théologique, et la réalité des attributs si discordans qu'on lui donne, l'on ne peut en rien conclure, pour autoriser la conduite où les cultes qu'on prescrit de lui rendre. La théologie est vraiment *le tonneau des Danaïdes*. A force de qualités contradictoires et d'assertions hasardées, elle a, pour ainsi dire, tellement garrotté son Dieu qu'elle l'a mis dans l'impossibilité d'agir. S'il est infiniment bon, quelle raison aurions-nous de le craindre? S'il est infiniment sage, de quoi nous inquiéter sur notre sort? S'il sait tout, pourquoi l'avertir de nos besoins, et le fatiguer de nos prières? S'il est partout, pourquoi lui élever des temples? S'il est maître de tout, pourquoi lui faire des sacrifices et des offrandes? S'il est juste, comment croire qu'il punisse des créatures qu'il a remplies de faiblesses? Si la grâce fait tout en elles, quelle raison aurait-il de les récompenser? S'il est tout-puissant, comment l'offenser, comment lui resister? S'il est raisonnable, comment se mettrait-il en colère contre des aveugles à qui il a laissé la liberté de déraisonner? S'il est immuable, de quel droit prétendrions-nous faire changer ses décrets? S'il est inconcevable, pourquoi nous en occuper? S'IL A PARLÉ, POURQUOI L'UNIVERS N'EST-IL PAS CONVAINCU? Si la connaissance d'un Dieu est la plus nécessaire, pourquoi n'est-elle pas la plus évidente et la plus claire?"—*Système de la Nature. London,* 1781.

The enlightened and benevolent Pliny thus publicly professes himself an atheist:—"Quâpropter effigiem Dei formamque quærere imbecillitatis humanæ reor. Quisquis est Deus (si modo est alius) et quâcunque in parte, totus est sensûs, totus est visûs, totus auditûs, totus animæ, totus animi, totus sui. . . . . Imperfectæ vero in homine naturæ præcipua solatia ne deum quidem posse omnia. Namque nec sibi potest mortem consciscere si velit, quod homini dedit optimum in tantis vitæ pœnis: nec mortales æternitate donare, aut revocare defunctos; nec facere ut qui vixit non vixerit, qui honores gessit non gesserit, nullumque habere in præteritum jus præterquam oblivionis, atque (ut facetis quoque argumentis societas hæc cum deo copuletur) ut bis dena viginti non sint, et multa similiter efficere non posse.—Per quæ declaratur haud dubie naturæ potentiam id quoque esse quod Deum vocamus."—PLIN. *Nat. Hist.* cap. *de Deo.*

The consistent Newtonian is necessarily an atheist. See Sir W. DRUMMOND'S *Academical Questions*, chap. iii.—Sir W. seems to consider the atheism to which it leads as a sufficient presumption of the falsehood of the system of gravitation: but surely it is more consistent with the good faith of philosophy to admit a deduction from facts than an hypothesis incapable of proof, although it might militate with the obstinate preconceptions of the mob. Had this author, instead of inveighing against the guilt and absurdity of atheism, demonstrated its falsehood, his conduct would have been more suited to the modesty of the sceptic and the toleration of the philosopher.

"Omnia enim per Dei potentiam facta sunt, imo, quia naturæ potentia nulla est nisi ipsa Dei potentia. Autem est nos eatenus Dei potentiam non intelligere quatenus causas naturales ignoramus; adeoque stulte ad eandem Dei potentiam recurritur, quando rei alicujus causam naturalem, sive est ipsam Dei potentiam, ignoramus."—SPINOSA, *Tract. Theologico-Pol.* chap. i., page 14.

P. 41.

Ahasuerus, rise!

"Ahasuerus the Jew crept forth from the dark cave of Mount Carmel. Near two thousand years have elapsed since he was first goaded by never-ending restlessness to rove the globe from pole to pole. When our Lord was wearied with the burthen of his ponderous cross, and wanted to rest before the door of Ahasuerus, the unfeeling wretch drove him away with brutality. The Saviour of mankind staggered, sinking under the heavy load, but uttered no complaint. An angel of death appeared before Ahasuerus, and exclaimed indignantly, 'Barbarian! thou hast denied rest to the Son of Man; be it denied thee also, until he comes to judge the world.'

"A black demon, let loose from hell upon Ahasuerus, goads him now from country to country: he is denied the consolation which death affords, and precluded from the rest of the peaceful grave.

"Ahasuerus crept forth from the dark cave of Mount Carmel—he shook the dust from his beard—and, taking up one of the skulls heaped there, hurled it down the eminence: it rebounded from the earth in shivered atoms. 'This was my father!' roared Ahasuerus. Seven more skulls rolled down from rock to rock; while the infuriate Jew, following them with ghastly looks, exclaimed—'And these were my wives!' He still continued to hurl down skull after skull, roaring in dreadful accents—'And these, and these, and these, were my children! They *could die;* but I! reprobate wretch, alas! I cannot die! Dreadful beyond conception is the judgment that hangs over me. Jerusalem fell—I crushed the sucking babe, and precipitated myself into the destructive flames. I cursed the Romans—but, alas! alas! the restless curse held me by the hair,—and I could not die! Rome the giantess fell—I placed myself before the falling statue—she fell, and did not crush me. Nations sprang up and disappeared before me; but I remained, and did not die. From cloud-encircled cliffs did I precipitate myself into the ocean; but the foaming billows cast me upon the shore, and the burning arrow of existence pierced my cold heart again. I leaped into Etna's flaming abyss, and roared with the giants for ten long months, polluting with my groans the mount's sulphureous mouth—ah! ten long months. The volcano fermented, and in a fiery stream of lava cast me up. I lay torn by the torture-snakes of hell amid the glowing cinders, and yet continued to exist.—A forest was on fire: I darted, on wings of fury and despair, into the crackling wood. Fire dropped upon me from the trees, but the flames only singed my limbs; alas! it could not consume them.—I now mixed with the butchers of mankind, and plunged in the tempest of the raging battle. I roared defiance to the infuriate Gaul, defiance to the victorious German; but arrows and spears rebounded in shivers from my body. The Saracen's flaming sword broke upon my skull: balls in vain hissed upon me: the lightnings of battle glared harmless around my loins: in vain did the elephant trample on me, in vain the iron hoof of the wrathful steed! The mine, big with destructive power, burst under me, and hurled me high in the air—I fell on heaps of smoking limbs, but was only singed. The giant's steel club rebounded from my body: the executioner's hand could not strangle me, the tiger's tooth could not pierce me, nor would the hungry lion in the circus devour me. I cohabited with poisonous snakes, and pinched the red crest of the dragon. The serpent stung but could not destroy me. The dragon tormented but dared not to devour me.—I now provoked the fury of tyrants: I said to Nero 'Thou art a bloodhound!' I said to Christiern 'Thou art a bloodhound!' I said to Muley Ismael 'Thou art a bloodhound!' The tyrants invented cruel torments, but did not kill me.———Ha! not to be able to die—not to be able to die! not to be permitted to rest after the toils of life—to be doomed to be imprisoned for ever in this clay-formed dungeon—to be forever clogged with this worthless body, its load of diseases and infirmities—to be condemned to hold for millenniums that yawning monster Sameness, and Time, that hungry hyena, ever bearing children, and ever devouring again her offspring!—Ha! not to be permitted

to die! Awful avenger in heaven, hast thou in thine armoury of wrath a punishment more dreadful? Then let it thunder upon me! Command a hurricane to sweep me down to the foot of Carmel; that I there may lie extended, may pant, and writhe, and die!'"

This fragment is the translation of part of some German work, whose title I have vainly endeavoured to discover. I picked it up, dirty and torn, some years ago, in Lincoln's Inn Fields.

P. 43.

I will beget a son, and he shall bear
The sins of all the world.

A book is put into our hands when children, called the Bible, the purport of whose history is briefly this. That God made the earth in six days, and there planted a delightful garden, in which he placed the first pair of human beings. In the midst of the garden he planted a tree, whose fruit, although within their reach, they were forbidden to touch. That the Devil, in the shape of a snake, persuaded them to eat of this fruit; in consequence of which, God condemned both them, and their posterity yet unborn, to satisfy his justice by their eternal misery. That, four thousand years after these events (the human race in the meanwhile having gone unredeemed to perdition), God engendered with the betrothed wife of a carpenter in Judea (whose virginity was nevertheless uninjured), and begat a son, whose name was Jesus Christ; and who was crucified and died, in order that no more men might be devoted to hell-fire, he bearing the burthen of his Father's displeasure by proxy. The book states, in addition, that the soul of whoever disbelieves this sacrifice will be burned with everlasting fire.

During many ages of misery and darkness this story gained implicit belief; but at length men arose who suspected that it was a fable and imposture, and that Jesus Christ, so far from being a God, was only a man like themselves. But a numerous set of men, who derived and still derive immense emoluments from this opinion in the shape of a popular belief, told the vulgar that, if they did not believe in the Bible, they would be damned to all eternity; and burned, imprisoned, and poisoned, all the unbiased and unconnected enquirers who occasionally arose. They still oppress them, so far as the people, now become more enlightened, will allow.

The belief in all that the Bible contains is called Christianity. A Roman governor of Judea, at the instance of a priest-led mob, crucified a man called Jesus eighteen centuries ago. He was a man of pure life, who desired to rescue his countrymen from the tyranny of their barbarous and degrading superstitions. The common fate of all who desire to benefit mankind awaited him. The rabble, at the instigation of the priests, demanded his death, although his very judge made public acknowledgment of his innocence. Jesus was sacrificed to the honour of that God with whom he was afterwards confounded. It is of importance, therefore, to distinguish between the pretended character of this being as the son of God and the Saviour of the world, and his real character as a man who, for a vain attempt to reform the world, paid the forfeit of his life to that overbearing tyranny which has since so long desolated the universe in his name. Whilst the one is a hypocritical demon, who announces himself as the God of compassion and peace even whilst he stretches forth his blood-red hand with the sword of discord to waste the earth, having confessedly devised this scheme of desolation from eternity: the other stands in the foremost list of those true heroes who have died in the glorious martyrdom of liberty, and have braved torture, contempt, and poverty, in the cause of suffering humanity.*

The vulgar, ever in extremes, became persuaded that the crucifixion of Jesus was a supernatural event. Testimonies of miracles, so frequent in unenlightened ages,

* Since writing this note, I have seen reason to suspect that Jesus was an ambitious man who aspired to the throne of Judea.

were not wanting to prove that he was something divine. This belief, rolling through the lapse of ages, met with the reveries of Plato and the reasonings of Aristotle; and acquired force and extent, until the divinity of Jesus became a dogma, which to dispute was death, which to doubt was infamy.

Christianity is now the established religion. He who attempts to impugn it must be contented to behold murderers and traitors take precedence of him in public opinion: though, if his genius be equal to his courage, and assisted by a peculiar coalition of circumstances, future ages may exalt him to a divinity, and persecute others in *his* name, as he was persecuted in the name of his predecessors in the homage of the world.

The same means that have supported every other popular belief have supported Christianity. War, imprisonment, assassination, and falsehood—deeds of unexampled and incomparable atrocity—have made it what it is. The blood shed by the votaries of the God of mercy and peace, since the establishment of his religion, would probably suffice to drown all other sectaries now on the habitable globe. We derive from our ancestors a faith thus fostered and supported: we quarrel, persecute, and hate, for its maintenance. Even under a government which, whilst it infringes the very right of thought and speech, boasts of permitting the liberty of the press, a man is pilloried and imprisoned because he is a deist, and no one raises his voice in the indignation of outraged humanity. But it is ever a proof that the falsehood of a proposition is felt by those who use coercion, not reasoning, to procure its admission: and a dispassionate observer would feel himself more powerfully interested in favour of a man who, depending on the truth of his opinions, simply stated his reasons for entertaining them, than in that of his aggressor, who, daringly avowing his unwillingness or incapacity to answer them by argument, proceeded to repress the energies and break the spirit of their promulgator by that torture and imprisonment whose infliction he could command.

Analogy seems to favour the opinion that, as, like other systems, Christianity has arisen and augmented, so, like them, it will decay and perish; that, as violence, darkness, and deceit, not reasoning and persuasion, have procured its admission among mankind, so, when enthusiasm has subsided, and time, that infallible controverter of false opinions, has involved its pretended evidences in the darkness of antiquity, it will become obsolete; that Milton's poem alone will give permanency to the remembrance of its absurdities; and that men will laugh as heartily at grace, faith, redemption, and original sin, as they now do at the metamorphoses of Jupiter, the miracles of Romish saints, the efficacy of witchcraft, and the appearance of departed spirits.

Had the Christian religion commenced and continued by the mere force of reasoning and persuasion, the preceding analogy would be inadmissible. We should never speculate on the future obsoleteness of a system perfectly conformable to nature and reason; it would endure so long as they endured; it would be a truth as indisputable as the light of the sun, the criminality of murder, and other facts whose evidence, depending on our organization and relative situations, must remain acknowledged as satisfactory so long as man is man. It is an incontrovertible fact, the consideration of which ought to repress the hasty conclusions of credulity, or moderate its obstinacy in maintaining them, that, had the Jews not been a fanatical race of men, had even the resolution of Pontius Pilate been equal to his candour, the Christian religion never could have prevailed, it could not even have existed: on so feeble a thread hangs the most cherished opinion of a sixth of the human race! When will the vulgar learn humility? When will the pride of ignorance blush at having believed before it could comprehend?

Either the Christian religion is true, or it is false. If true, it comes from God, and its authenticity can admit of doubt and dispute no further than its omnipotent author is willing to allow. Either the power or the goodness of God is called in question if

he leaves those doctrines most essential to the well-being of man in doubt and dispute; the only ones which, since their promulgation, have been the subject of unceasing cavil, the cause of irreconcileable hatred. "*If God has spoken, why is the universe not convinced?*"

There is this passage in the Christian Scriptures: "Those who obey not God, and believe not the Gospel of his Son, shall be punished with everlasting destruction." This is the pivot upon which all religions turn: they all assume that it is in our power to believe or not to believe; whereas the mind can only believe that which it thinks true. A human being can only be supposed accountable for those actions which are influenced by his will. But belief is utterly distinct from and unconnected with volition: it is the apprehension of the agreement or disagreement of the ideas that compose any proposition. Belief is a passion or involuntary operation of the mind, and, like other passions, its intensity is precisely proportionate to the degrees of excitement. Volition is essential to merit or demerit. But the Christian religion attaches the highest possible degrees of merit and demerit to that which is worthy of neither, and which is totally unconnected with the peculiar faculty of the mind whose presence is essential to their being.

Christianity was intended to reform the world. Had an all-wise Being planned it, nothing is more improbable than that it should have failed: omniscience would infallibly have foreseen the inutility of a scheme which experience demonstrates, to this age, to have been utterly unsuccessful.

Christianity inculcates the necessity of supplicating the Deity. Prayer may be considered under two points of view; as an endeavour to change the intentions of God, or as a formal testimony of our obedience. But the former case supposes that the caprices of a limited intelligence can occasionally instruct the Creator of the world how to regulate the universe; and the latter, a certain degree of servility analogous to the loyalty demanded by earthly tyrants. Obedience indeed is only the pitiful and cowardly egotism of him who thinks that he can do something better than reason.

Christianity, like all other religions, rests upon miracles, prophecies, and martyrdoms. No religion ever existed which had not its prophets, its attested miracles, and, above all, crowds of devotees who would bear patiently the most horrible tortures to prove its authenticity. It should appear that in no case can a discriminating mind subscribe to the genuineness of a miracle. A miracle is an infraction of nature's law by a supernatural cause; by a cause acting beyond that eternal circle within which all things are included. God breaks through the law of nature, that he may convince mankind of the truth of that revelation which, in spite of his precautions, has been, since its introduction, the subject of unceasing schism and cavil.

Miracles resolve themselves into the following question:*—Whether it is more probable the laws of nature, hitherto so immutably harmonious, should have undergone violation, or that a man should have told a lie? Whether it is more probable that we are ignorant of the natural cause of an event, or that we know the supernatural one? That in old times, when the powers of nature were less known than at present, a certain set of men were themselves deceived, or had some hidden motive for deceiving others; or that God begat a son, who, in his legislation, measuring merit by belief, evidenced himself to be totally ignorant of the powers of the human mind—of what is voluntary, and what is the contrary?

We have many instances of men telling lies;—none of an infraction of nature's laws, those laws of whose government alone we have any knowledge or experience. The records of all nations afford innumerable instances of men deceiving others either from vanity or interest, or themselves being deceived by the limitedness of their

* See Hume's *Essays*, vol. ii. page 121.

views, and their ignorance of natural causes; but where is the accredited case of God having come upon earth to give the lie to his own creations? There would be something truly wonderful in the appearance of a ghost; but the assertion of a child that he saw one as he passed through the church-yard is universally admitted to be less miraculous.

But even supposing that a man should raise a dead body to life before our eyes, and on this fact rest his claim to being considered the son of God;—the Humane Society restores drowned persons, and, as it makes no mystery of the method it employs, its members are not mistaken for the sons of God. All that we have a right to infer from our ignorance of the cause of any event is that we do not know it. Had Mexicans attended to this simple rule when they heard the cannon of the Spaniards, they would not have considered them as gods. The experiments of modern chemistry would have defied the wisest philosophers of ancient Greece and Rome to have accounted for them on natural principles. An author of strong common sense has observed that "a miracle is no miracle at second-hand;" he might have added, that a miracle is no miracle in any case; for, until we are acquainted with all natural causes, we have no reason to imagine others.

There remains to be considered another proof of Christianity—prophecy. A book is written before a certain event, in which this event is foretold; how could the prophet have foreknown it without inspiration? how could he have been inspired without God? The greatest stress is laid on the prophecies of Moses and Hosea on the dispersion of the Jews, and that of Isaiah concerning the coming of the Messiah. The prophecy of Moses is a collection of every possible cursing and blessing, and it is so far from being marvellous that the one of dispersion should have been fulfilled that it would have been more surprising if, out of all these, none should have taken effect. In *Deuteronomy*, chap. xxviii., ver. 64, where Moses explicitly foretells the dispersion, he states that they shall there serve gods of wood and stone: "And the Lord shall scatter thee among all people, from the one end of the earth even unto the other, *and there thou shalt serve other gods, which neither thou nor thy fathers have known, even wood and stone.*" The Jews are at this day remarkably tenacious of their religion. Moses also declares that they shall be subjected to these curses for disobedience to his ritual: "And it shall come to pass, if thou wilt not hearken unto the voice of the Lord thy God, to observe to do all the commandments and statutes which I command you this day, that all these curses shall come upon thee and overtake thee." Is this the real reason? The third, fourth, and fifth chapters of Hosea are a piece of immodest confession. The indelicate type might apply in a hundred senses to a hundred things. The fifty-third chapter of Isaiah is more explicit, yet it does not exceed in clearness the oracles of Delphos. The historical proof that Moses, Isaiah, and Hosea, did write when they are said to have written, is far from being clear and circumstantial.

But prophecy requires proof in its character as a miracle. We have no right to suppose that a man foreknew future events from God, until it is demonstrated that he neither could know them by his own exertions, nor that the writings which contain the prediction could possibly have been fabricated after the event pretended to be foretold. It is more probable that writings pretending to divine inspiration should have been fabricated after the fulfilment of their pretended prediction than that they should have really been divinely inspired; when we consider that the latter supposition makes God at once the creator of the human mind, and ignorant of its primary powers, particularly as we have numberless instances of false religions, and forged prophecies of things long past, and no accredited case of God having conversed with men directly or indirectly. It is also possible that the description of an event might have foregone its occurrence; but this is far from being a legitimate proof of a divine revelation, as many men not pretending to the character of a prophet have nevertheless, in this sense, prophesied.

Lord Chesterfield was never yet taken for a prophet, even by a bishop, yet he uttered this remarkable prediction:—"The despotic government of France is screwed up to the highest pitch; a revolution is fast approaching; that revolution, I am convinced, will be radical and sanguinary." This appeared in the letters of the prophet long before the accomplishment of this wonderful prediction. Now, have these particulars come to pass, or have they not? If they have, how could the earl have foreknown them without inspiration? If we admit the truth of the Christian religion on testimony such as this, we must admit, on the same strength of evidence, that God has affixed the highest rewards to belief, and the eternal tortures of the never-dying worm to disbelief; both of which have been demonstrated to be involuntary.

The last proof of the Christian religion depends on the influence of the Holy Ghost. Theologians divide the influence of the Holy Ghost into its ordinary and extraordinary modes of operation. The latter is supposed to be that which inspired the prophets and apostles; and the former to be the grace of God, which summarily makes known the truth of his revelation to those whose minds are fitted for its reception by a submissive perusal of his word. Persons convinced in this manner can do anything but account for their conviction, describe the time at which it happened, or the manner in which it came upon them. It is supposed to enter the mind by other channels than those of the senses, and therefore professes to be superior to reason founded on their experience.

Admitting, however, the usefulness or possibility of a divine revelation, unless we demolish the foundations of all human knowledge, it is requisite that our reason should previously demonstrate its genuineness; for, before we extinguish the steady ray of reason and common sense, it is fit that we should discover whether we cannot do without their assistance, whether or no there be any other which may suffice to guide us through the labyrinth of life:* for, if a man is to be inspired upon all occasions, if he is to be sure of a thing *because he is sure*, if the ordinary operations of the Spirit are not to be considered very extraordinary modes of demonstration, if enthusiasm is to usurp the place of proof, and madness that of sanity, all reasoning is superfluous. The Mahometan dies fighting for his prophet, the Indian immolates himself at the chariot-wheels of Brahma, the Hottentot worships an insect, the Negro a bunch of feathers, the Mexican sacrifices human victims. Their degree of conviction must certainly be very strong: it cannot arise from reasoning,—it must from feelings, the reward of their prayers. If each of these should affirm, in opposition to the strongest possible arguments, that inspiration carried internal evidence, I fear their inspired brethren, the orthodox missionaries, would be so uncharitable as to pronounce them obstinate.

Miracles cannot be received as testimonies of a disputed fact, because all human testimony has ever been insufficient to establish the possibility of miracles. That which is incapable of proof itself is no proof of anything else. Prophecy has also been rejected by the test of reason. Those then who have been actually inspired are the only true believers in the Christian religion.

"Mox numine viso
Virginei tumuere sinûs, innuptaque mater
Arcano stupuit compleri viscera partu,
Auctorem paritura suum. Mortalia corda
Artificem texere poli, latuitque sub uno
Pectore qui totum late complectitur orbem."
CLAUDIANI *Carmen Paschale.*

Does not so monstrous and disgusting an absurdity carry its own infamy and refutation with itself?

* See Locke's *Essay on the Human Understanding*, book iv. chap. xix. on Enthusiasm.

P. 52.

Him (still from hope to hope the bliss pursuing
Which from the exhaustless store of human weal
Dawns on the virtuous mind) the thoughts that rise
In time-destroying infiniteness gift
With self-enshrined eternity, &c.

Time is our consciousness of the succession of ideas in our mind. Vivid sensation of either pain or pleasure makes the time seem long, as the common phrase is, because it renders us more acutely conscious of our ideas. If a mind be conscious of a hundred ideas during one minute by the clock, and of two hundred during another, the latter of these spaces would actually occupy so much greater extent in the mind as two exceed one in quantity. If therefore the human mind, by any future improvement of its sensibility, should become conscious of an infinite number of ideas in a minute, that minute would be eternity. I do not hence infer that the actual space between the birth and death of a man will ever be prolonged; but that his sensibility is perfectible, and that the number of ideas which his mind is capable of receiving is indefinite. One man is stretched on the rack during twelve hours, another sleeps soundly in his bed: the difference of time perceived by these two persons is immense; one hardly will believe that half-an-hour has elapsed, the other could credit that centuries had flown during his agony. Thus the life of a man of virtue and talent who should die in his thirtieth year is, with regard to his own feelings, longer than that of a miserable priest-ridden slave who dreams out a century of dullness. The one has perpetually cultivated his mental faculties, has rendered himself master of his thoughts, can abstract and generalize amid the lethargy of everyday business; —the other can slumber over the brightest moments of his being, and is unable to remember the happiest hour of his life. Perhaps the perishing ephemeron enjoys a longer life than the tortoise.

Dark flood of time!
Roll as it listeth thee—I measure not
By months or moments thy ambiguous course.
Another may stand by me on the brink,
And watch the bubble whirled beyond his ken,
That pauses at my feet. The sense of love,
The thirst for action, and the impassioned thought,
Prolong my being: if I wake no more,
My life more actual living will contain
Than some grey veterans' of the world's cold school,
Whose listless hours unprofitably roll,
By one enthusiast feeling unredeemed.

See Godwin's Pol. Just. vol. i. *page* 411; *and Condorcet, Esquisse d'un Tableau Historique des Progrès de l'Esprit Humain, époque* ix.

P. 52.

No longer now
He slays the lamb that looks him in the face.

I hold that the depravity of the physical and moral nature of man originated in his unnatural habits of life. The origin of man, like that of the universe of which he is a part, is enveloped in impenetrable mystery. His generations either had a beginning, or they had not. The weight of evidence in favour of each of these suppositions seems tolerably equal; and it is perfectly unimportant to the present argument *which* is assumed. The language spoken, however, by the mythology of nearly all religions, seems to prove that at some distant period man forsook the path of nature, and sacrificed the purity and happiness of his being to unnatural appetites. The date of this event seems to have also been that of some great change in the climates of the earth, with which it has an obvious correspondence. The allegory of Adam and Eve eating of the tree of evil, and entailing upon their posterity the wrath of God and the loss of everlasting life, admits of no other explanation than the disease

and crime that have flowed from unnatural diet. Milton was so well aware of this that he makes Raphael thus exhibit to Adam the consequence of his disobedience.

"Immediately a place
Before his eyes appeared, sad, noisome, dark.
A lazar-house it seemed; wherein were laid
Numbers of all diseased, all maladies
Of ghastly spasm or racking torture, qualms
Of heart-sick agony, all feverous kinds,
Convulsions, epilepsies, fierce catarrhs,
Intestine stone and ulcer, colic pangs,
Demoniac frenzy, moping melancholy,
And moon-struck madness, pining atrophy,
Marasmus, and wide-wasting pestilence,
Dropsies, and asthmas, and joint-racking rheums."

—And how many thousands more might not be added to this frightful catalogue!

The story of Prometheus is one likewise which, although universally admitted to be allegorical, has never been satisfactorily explained. Prometheus stole fire from heaven, and was chained for this crime to Mount Caucasus, where a vulture continually devoured his liver, that grew to meet its hunger. Hesiod says that before the time of Prometheus mankind were exempt from suffering; that they enjoyed a vigorous youth, and that death, when at length it came, approached like sleep, and gently closed their eyes. Again, so general was this opinion that Horace, a poet of the Augustan age, writes—

"Audax omnia perpeti,
Gens humana ruit per vetitum nefas.
Audax Iapeti genus
Ignem fraude malâ gentibus intulit:
Post ignem ætheriâ domo
Subductum, macies et nova febrium
Terris incubuit cohors,
Semotique prius tarda necessitas
Lethi corripuit gradum."

How plain a language is spoken by all this! Prometheus (who represents the human race) effected some great change in the condition of his nature, and applied fire to culinary purposes; thus inventing an expedient for screening from his disgust the horrors of the shambles. From this moment, his vitals were devoured by the vulture of disease. It consumed his being in every shape of its loathsome and infinite variety, inducing the soul-quelling sinkings of premature and violent death. All vice arose from the ruin of healthful innocence. Tyranny, superstition, commerce, and inequality, were then first known when reason vainly attempted to guide the wanderings of exacerbated passion. I conclude this part of the subject with an abstract from Mr. Newton's *Defence of Vegetable Regimen*, from whom I have borrowed this interpretation of the fable of Prometheus.

"Making allowance for such transposition of the events of the allegory as time might produce after the important truths were forgotten which this portion of the ancient mythology was intended to transmit, the drift of the fable seems to be this:—Man at his creation was endowed with the gift of perpetual youth; that is, he was not formed to be a sickly suffering creature, as we now see him, but to enjoy health, and to sink by slow degrees into the bosom of his parent earth without disease or pain. Prometheus first taught the use of animal food (Primus bovem occidit Prometheus *), and of fire, with which to render it more digestible and pleasing to the taste. Jupiter and the rest of the gods, foreseeing the consequences of these inventions, were amused or irritated at the short-sighted devices of the newly-formed creature, and left him to experience the sad effects of them. Thirst, the necessary concomitant of a flesh diet (perhaps of all diet vitiated by culinary preparation), ensued; water was resorted to, and man forfeited the inestimable gift of health

* *Plin. Nat. Hist.* lib. vii. sect. 57.

which he had received from heaven: he became diseased, the partaker of a precarious existence, and no longer descended slowly to his grave."*

"But just disease to luxury succeeds,
And every death its own avenger breeds;
The fury passions from that blood began,
And turned on man a fiercer savage—man."

Man, and the animals whom he has infected with his society, or depraved by his dominion, are alone diseased. The wild hog, the mouflon, the bison, and the wolf, are perfectly exempt from malady, and invariably die either from external violence or natural old age. But the domestic hog, the sheep, the cow, and the dog, are subject to an incredible variety of distempers; and, like the corrupters of their nature, have physicians who thrive upon their miseries. The supereminence of man is like Satan's, the supereminence of pain; and the majority of his species, doomed to penury, disease, and crime, have reason to curse the untoward event that, by enabling him to communicate his sensations, raised him above the level of his fellow-animals. But the steps that have been taken are irrevocable. The whole of human science is comprised in one question: How can the advantages of intellect and civilization be reconciled with the liberty and pure pleasures of natural life? how can we take the benefits, and reject the evils, of the system which is now interwoven with all the fibres of our being?—I believe that abstinence from animal food and spirituous liquors would in a great measure capacitate us for the solution of this important question.

It is true that mental and bodily derangement is attributable in part to other deviations from rectitude and nature than those which concern diet. The mistakes cherished by society respecting the connexion of the sexes, whence the misery and diseases of unsatisfied celibacy, unenjoying prostitution, and the premature arrival of puberty, necessarily spring; the putrid atmosphere of crowded cities; the exhalations of chemical processes; the muffling of our bodies in superfluous apparel; the absurd treatment of infants;—all these and innumerable other causes contribute their mite to the mass of human evil.

Comparative anatomy teaches us that man resembles frugivorous animals in everything, and carnivorous in nothing; he has neither claws wherewith to seize his prey, nor distinct and pointed teeth to tear the living fibre. A mandarin "of the first class," with nails two inches long, would probably find them alone inefficient to hold even a hare. After every subterfuge of gluttony, the bull must be degraded into the ox, and the ram into the wether, by an unnatural and inhuman operation, that the flaccid fibre may offer a fainter resistance to rebellious nature. It is only by softening and disguising dead flesh by culinary preparation that it is rendered susceptible of mastication or digestion; and that the sight of its bloody juices and raw horror does not excite intolerable loathing and disgust. Let the advocate of animal food force himself to a decisive experiment on its fitness, and, as Plutarch recommends, tear a living lamb with his teeth, and, plunging his head into its vitals, slake his thirst with the steaming blood; when fresh from the deed of horror, let him revert to the irresistible instinct of nature that would rise in judgment against it, and say "Nature formed me for such work as this." Then, and then only, would he be consistent.

Man resembles no carnivorous animal. There is no exception, unless man be one, to the rule of herbivorous animals' having cellulated colons.

The orang-outang perfectly resembles man both in the order and number of his teeth. The orang-outang is the most anthropomorphous of the ape tribe, all of which are strictly frugivorous. There is no other species of animals, which live on different food, in which this analogy exists.† In many frugivorous animals, the canine teeth

* *Return to Nature.* Cadell, 1811.

† Cuvier, *Leçons d'Anat. Comp.* tom. iii. pages 169, 373, 448, 465, 480. *Rees's Cyclopædia*, article "Man."

are more pointed and distinct than those of man. The resemblance also of the human stomach to that of the orang-outang is greater than to that of any other animal.

The intestines are also identical with those of herbivorous animals, which present a larger surface for absorption, and have ample and cellulated colons. The cæcum also, though short, is larger than that of carnivorous animals; and even here the orang-outang retains its accustomed similarity.

The structure of the human frame, then, is that of one fitted to a pure vegetable diet in every essential particular. It is true that the reluctance to abstain from animal food, in those who have been long accustomed to its stimulus, is so great, in some persons of weak minds, as to be scarcely overcome; but this is far from bringing any argument in its favour. A lamb which was fed for some time on flesh by a ship's crew refused its natural diet at the end of the voyage. There are numerous instances of horses, sheep, oxen, and even wood-pigeons, having been taught to live upon flesh, until they have loathed their natural aliment. Young children evidently prefer pastry, oranges, apples, and other fruit, to the flesh of animals: until, by the gradual depravation of the digestive organs, the free use of vegetables has for a time produced serious inconveniences; *for a time* I say, since there never was an instance wherein a change from spirituous liquors and animal food to vegetables and pure water has failed ultimately to invigorate the body by rendering its juices bland and consentaneous, and to restore to the mind that cheerfulness and elasticity which not one in fifty possesses on the present system. A love of strong liquors is also with difficulty taught to infants. Almost every one remembers the wry faces which the first glass of port produced. Unsophisticated instinct is invariably unerring; but to decide on the fitness of animal food from the perverted appetites which its constrained adoption produces is to make the criminal a judge of his own cause:—it is even worse; for it is appealing to the infatuated drunkard in a question of the salubrity of brandy.

What is the cause of morbid action in the animal system? Not the air we breathe, for our fellow-denizens of nature breathe the same, uninjured; not the water we drink (if remote from the pollutions of man and his inventions*), for the animals drink it too; not the earth we tread upon; not the unobscured sight of glorious nature, in the wood, the field, or the expanse of sky and ocean; nothing that we are or do in common with the undiseased inhabitants of the forest; but something then wherein we differ from them; our habit of altering our food by fire, so that our appetite is no longer a just criterion for the fitness of its gratification. Except in children, there remain no traces of that instinct which determines, in all other animals, what aliment is natural or otherwise; and so perfectly obliterated are they in the reasoning adults of our species that it has become necessary to urge considerations drawn from comparative anatomy to prove that we are naturally frugivorous.

Crime is madness. Madness is disease. Whenever the cause of disease shall be discovered, the root from which all vice and misery have so long overshadowed the globe will lie bare to the axe. All the exertions of man, from that moment, may be considered as tending to the clear profit of his species. No sane mind in a sane body resolves upon a real crime. It is a man of violent passions, blood-shot eyes, and swollen veins, that alone can grasp the knife of murder. The system of a simple diet promises no utopian advantages. It is no mere reform of legislation, whilst the furious passions and evil propensities of the human heart, in which it had its origin, are still unassuaged. It strikes at the root of all evil; and is an experiment which

* The necessity of resorting to some means of purifying water, and the diseases which arise from its adulteration in civilized countries, are sufficiently apparent. See Dr. Lambe's *Reports on Cancer*. I do not assert that the use of water is in itself unnatural, but that the unperverted palate would swallow no liquid capable of occasioning disease.

may be tried with success not alone by nations, but by small societies, families, and even individuals. In no cases has a return to vegetable diet produced the slightest injury; in most it has been attended with changes undeniably beneficial. Should ever a physician be born with the genius of Locke, I am persuaded that he might trace all bodily and mental derangements to our unnatural habits, as clearly as that philosopher has traced all knowledge to sensation. What prolific sources of disease are not those mineral and vegetable poisons that have been introduced for its extirpation! How many thousands have become murderers and robbers, bigots and domestic tyrants, dissolute and abandoned adventurers, from the use of fermented liquors, who, had they slaked their thirst only with pure water, would have lived but to diffuse the happiness of their own unperverted feelings! How many groundless opinions and absurd institutions have received a general sanction from the sottishness and the intemperance of individuals! Who will assert that, had the populace of Paris satisfied their hunger at the ever-furnished table of vegetable nature, they would have lent their brutal suffrage to the proscription-list of Robespierre? Could a set of men whose passions were not perverted by unnatural stimuli look with coolness on an *auto da fé*? Is it to be believed that a being of gentle feelings, rising from his meal of roots, would take delight in sports of blood? Was Nero a man of temperate life? Could you read calm health in his cheek, flushed with ungovernable propensities of hatred for the human race? Did Muley Ismael's pulse beat evenly, was his skin transparent, did his eyes beam with healthfulness, and its invariable concomitants, cheerfulness and benignity? Though history has decided none of these questions, a child could not hesitate to answer in the negative. Surely the bile-suffused cheek of Buonaparte, his wrinkled brow and yellow eye, the ceaseless inquietude of his nervous system, speak no less plainly the character of his unresting ambition than his murders and his victories. It is impossible, had Buonaparte descended from a race of vegetable-feeders, that he could have had either the inclination or the power to ascend the throne of the Bourbons. The desire of tyranny could scarcely be excited in the individual, the power to tyrannize would certainly not be delegated by a society neither frenzied by inebriation nor rendered impotent and irrational by disease. Pregnant indeed with inexhaustible calamity is the renunciation of instinct, as it concerns our physical nature; arithmetic cannot enumerate, nor reason perhaps suspect, the multitudinous sources of disease in civilized life. Even common water, that apparently innoxious pabulum, when corrupted by the filth of populous cities, is a deadly and insidious destroyer.*

There is no disease, bodily or mental, which adoption of vegetable diet and pure water has not infallibly mitigated, wherever the experiment has been fairly tried. Debility is gradually converted into strength; disease into healthfulness; madness in all its hideous variety, from the ravings of the fettered maniac to the unaccountable irrationalities of ill temper that make a hell of domestic life, into a calm and considerate evenness of temper that alone might offer a certain pledge of the future moral reformation of society. On a natural system of diet, old age would be our last and our only malady; the term of our existence would be protracted; we should enjoy life, and no longer preclude others from the enjoyment of it; all sensational delights would be infinitely more exquisite and perfect; the very sense of being would then be a continued pleasure, such as we now feel it in some few and favoured moments of our youth. By all that is sacred in our hopes for the human race, I conjure those who love happiness and truth to give a fair trial to the vegetable system! Reasoning is surely superfluous on a subject whose merits an experience of six months would set for ever at rest. But it is only among the enlightened and benevolent that so great a sacrifice of appetite and prejudice can be expected, even though its ultimate excellence should not admit of dispute. It is found easier, by the short-sighted

* Lambe's *Reports on Cancer.*

victims of disease, to palliate their torments by medicine than to prevent them by regimen. The vulgar of all ranks are invariably sensual and indocile; yet I cannot but feel myself persuaded that, when the benefits of vegetable diet are mathematically proved; when it is as clear that those who live naturally are exempt from premature death as that one is not nine; the most sottish of mankind will feel a preference towards a long and tranquil, contrasted with a short and painful, life. On the average, out of sixty persons, four die in three years. Hopes are entertained that, in April 1814, a statement will be given that sixty persons, all having lived more than three years on vegetables and pure water, are then in *perfect health*. More than two years have now elapsed; *not one of them has died*; no such example will be found in any sixty persons taken at random. Seventeen persons of all ages (the families of Dr. Lambe and Mr. Newton) have lived for seven years on this diet, without a death, and almost without the slightest illness. Surely when we consider that some of these were infants, and one a martyr to asthma, now nearly subdued, we may challenge any seventeen persons taken at random in this city to exhibit a parallel case. Those who may have been excited to question the rectitude of established habits of diet by these loose remarks should consult Mr. Newton's luminous and eloquent essay.*

When these proofs come fairly before the world, and are clearly seen by all who understand arithmetic, it is scarcely possible that abstinence from aliment demonstrably pernicious should not become universal. In proportion to the number of proselytes, so will be the weight of evidence; and, when a thousand persons can be produced, living on vegetables and distilled water, who have to dread no disease but old age, the world will be compelled to regard animal flesh and fermented liquors as slow but certain poisons. The change which would be produced by simpler habits on political economy is sufficiently remarkable. The monopolizing eater of animal flesh would no longer destroy his constitution by devouring an acre at a meal; and many loaves of bread would cease to contribute to gout, madness, and apoplexy, in the shape of a pint of porter or a dram of gin, when appeasing the long-protracted famine of the hard-working peasant's hungry babes. The quantity of nutritious vegetable matter consumed in fattening the carcase of an ox would afford ten times the sustenance, undepraving indeed, and incapable of generating disease, if gathered immediately from the bosom of the earth. The most fertile districts of the habitable globe are now actually cultivated by men for animals, at a delay and waste of aliment absolutely incapable of calculation. It is only the wealthy that can to any great degree, even now, indulge the unnatural craving for dead flesh; and they pay for the greater license of the privilege by subjection to supernumerary diseases. Again, the spirit of the nation that should take the lead in this great reform would insensibly become agricultural: commerce, with all its vice, selfishness, and corruption, would gradually decline; more natural habits would produce gentler manners; and the excessive complication of political relations would be so far simplified that every individual might feel and understand why he loved his country, and took a personal interest in its welfare. How would England, for example, depend on the caprices of foreign rulers, if she contained within herself all the necessaries, and despised whatever they possessed of the luxuries, of life? How could they starve her into compliance with their views? Of what consequence would it be that they refused to take her woollen manufactures, when large and fertile tracts of the island ceased to be allotted to the waste of pasturage? On a natural system of diet, we should require no spices from India; no wines from Portugal, Spain, France, or Madeira; none of those multitudinous articles of luxury for which every corner of the globe is rifled, and which are the causes of so much individual rivalship, such calamitous and sanguinary national disputes. In the history of modern times, the avarice of commercial

* *Return to Nature, or Defence of Vegetable Regimen.* Cadell, 1811.

monopoly, no less than the ambition of weak and wicked chiefs, seems to have fomented the universal discord, to have added stubbornness to the mistakes of cabinets, and indocility to the infatuation of the people. Let it ever be remembered that it is the direct influence of commerce to make the interval between the richest and the poorest man wider and more unconquerable. Let it be remembered that it is a foe to everything of real worth and excellence in the human character. The odious and disgusting aristocracy of wealth is built upon the ruins of all that is good in chivalry or republicanism; and luxury is the forerunner of a barbarism scarce capable of cure. Is it impossible to realize a state of society where all the energies of man shall be directed to the production of his solid happiness? Certainly, if this advantage (the object of all political speculation) be in any degree attainable, it is attainable only by a community which holds out no factitious incentives to the avarice and ambition of the few, and which is internally organized for the liberty, security, and comfort, of the many. None must be entrusted with power (and money is the completest species of power) who do not stand pledged to use it exclusively for the general benefit. But the use of animal flesh and fermented liquors directly militates with this equality of the rights of man. The peasant cannot gratify these fashionable cravings without leaving his family to starve. Without disease and war, those sweeping curtailers of population, pasturage would include a waste too great to be afforded. The labour requisite to support a family is far lighter* than is usually supposed. The peasantry work not only for themselves, but for the aristocracy, the army, and the manufacturers.

The advantage of a reform in diet is obviously greater than that of any other. It strikes at the root of the evil. To remedy the abuses of legislation, before we annihilate the propensities by which they are produced, is to suppose that, by taking away the effect, the cause will cease to operate. But the efficacy of this system depends entirely on the proselytism of individuals; and grounds its merits, as a benefit to the community, upon the total change of the dietetic habits in its members. It proceeds securely from a number of particular cases to one that is universal; and has this advantage over the contrary mode, that one error does not invalidate all that has gone before.

Let not too much, however, be expected from this system. The healthiest among us is not exempt from hereditary disease. The most symmetrical, athletic, and long-lived, is a being inexpressibly inferior to what he would have been, had not the unnatural habits of his ancestors accumulated for him a certain portion of malady and deformity. In the most perfect specimen of civilized man, something is still found wanting by the physiological critic. Can a return to nature, then, instantaneously eradicate predispositions that have been slowly taking root in the silence of innumerable ages?—Indubitably not. All that I contend for is that, from the moment of relinquishing all unnatural habits, no new disease is generated; and that the predisposition to hereditary maladies gradually perishes for want of its accustomed supply. In cases of consumption, cancer, gout, asthma, and scrofula, such is the invariable tendency of a diet of vegetables and pure water.

Those who may be induced by these remarks to give the vegetable system a fair trial should, in the first place, date the commencement of their practice from the moment of their conviction. All depends upon breaking through a pernicious habit resolutely and at once. Dr. Trotter† asserts that no drunkard was ever reformed by

* It has come under the author's experience that some of the workmen on an embankment in North Wales, who, in consequence of the inability of the proprietor to pay them, seldom received their wages, have supported large families by cultivating small spots of sterile ground by moonlight. In the notes to Pratt's poem, *Bread, or the Poor*, is an account of an industrious labourer who, by working in a small garden before and after his day's task, attained to an enviable state of independence.

† See Trotter on *The Nervous Temperament*.

gradually relinquishing his dram. Animal flesh, in its effects on the human stomach, is analogous to a dram. It is similar in the kind, though differing in the degree, of its operation. The proselyte to pure diet must be warned to expect a temporary diminution of muscular strength. The subtraction of a powerful stimulus will suffice to account for this event. But it is only temporary, and is succeeded by an equable capability for exertion, far surpassing his former various and fluctuating strength. Above all, he will acquire an easiness of breathing, by which such exertion is performed with a remarkable exemption from that painful and difficult panting now felt by almost every one after hastily climbing an ordinary mountain. He will be equally capable of bodily exertion or mental application, after as before his simple meal. He will feel none of the narcotic effects of ordinary diet. Irritability, the direct consequence of exhausting stimuli, would yield to the power of natural and tranquil impulses. He will no longer pine under the lethargy of ennui, that unconquerable weariness of life, more to be dreaded than death itself. He will escape the epidemic madness which broods over its own injurious notions of the Deity, and "realizes the hell that priests and beldams feign." Every man forms as it were his god from his own character; to the divinity of one of simple habits no offering would be more acceptable than the happiness of his creatures. He would be incapable of hating or persecuting others for the love of God. He will find, moreover, a system of simple diet to be a system of perfect epicurism. He will no longer be incessantly occupied in blunting and destroying those organs from which he expects his gratification. The pleasures of taste to be derived from a dinner of potatoes, beans, peas, turnips, lettuces, with a dessert of apples, gooseberries, strawberries, currants, raspberries, and, in winter, oranges, apples, and pears, is far greater than is supposed. Those who wait until they can eat this plain fare with the sauce of appetite will scarcely join with the hypocritical sensualist at a lord-mayor's feast who declaims against the pleasures of the table. Solomon kept a thousand concubines, and owned in despair that all was vanity. The man whose happiness is constituted by the society of one amiable woman would find some difficulty in sympathizing with the disappointment of this venerable debauchee.

I address myself not to the young enthusiast only, the ardent devotee of truth and virtue, the pure and passionate moralist yet unvitiated by the contagion of the world. *He* will embrace a pure system from its abstract truth, its beauty, its simplicity, and its promise of wide-extended benefit; unless custom has turned poison into food, he will hate the brutal pleasures of the chase by instinct; it will be a contemplation full of horror and disappointment to his mind that beings capable of the gentlest and most admirable sympathies should take delight in the death-pangs and last convulsions of dying animals. The elderly man whose youth has been poisoned by intemperance, or who has lived with apparent moderation, and is afflicted with a variety of painful maladies, would find his account in a beneficial change produced without the risk of poisonous medicines. The mother to whom the perpetual restlessness of disease and unaccountable deaths incident to her children are the causes of incurable unhappiness would on this diet experience the satisfaction of beholding their perpetual health and natural playfulness.* The most valuable lives are daily destroyed by diseases that it

* See Mr. Newton's book. His children are the most beautiful and healthy creatures it is possible to conceive: the girls are perfect models for a sculptor; their dispositions are also the most gentle and conciliating; the judicious treatment which they experience in other points may be a correlative cause of this. In the first five years of their life, of 18,000 children that are born, 7500 die of various diseases, and how many more of those that survive are rendered miserable by maladies not immediately mortal! The quality and quantity of a woman's milk are materially injured by the use of dead flesh. In an island near Iceland where no vegetables are to be got, the children invariably die of tetanus before they are three weeks old, and the population is supplied from the main land.—*Sir G. Mackenzie's History of Iceland.* See also *Emile*, chap. i. pages 53, 54, 56.

is dangerous to palliate, and impossible to cure, by medicine. How much longer will man continue to pimp for the gluttony of death, his most insidious, implacable, and eternal foe?

Ἀλλὰ δράκοντας ἀγρίους καλεῖτε, καὶ παρδάλεις, καὶ λέοντας, αὐτοὶ δὲ μιαιφονεῖτε εἰς ὠμότητα, καταλιπόντες ἐκείνοις οὐδέν· ἐκείνοις μὲν γὰρ ὁ φόνος τροφὴ; ἡμῖν δὲ ὄψον ἐστίν. . . . . Ὅτι γὰρ οὐκ ἔστιν ἀνθρώπῳ κατὰ φύσιν τὸ σαρκοφαγεῖν, πρῶτον μὲν ἀπὸ τῶν σωμάτων ὧνλοῦται τῆς κατασκευῆς. Οὐδενὶ γὰρ ἔοικε τὸ ἀνθρώπου σῶμα τῶν ἐπὶ σαρκοφαγίᾳ γεγονότων, οὐ χρυπότης χείλους, οὐκ ὀξύτης ὄνυχος, οὐ τραχύτης ὀδόντων πρόσεστιν, οὐ κοιλίας εὐτονία καὶ πνεύματος θερμότης, τρέψαι καὶ κατεργάσασθαι δυνατὴ τὸ βαρὺ καὶ κρεῶδες· ἀλλ' αὐτόθεν ἡ φύσις τῇ λειότητι τῶν ὀδόντων, καὶ τῇ σμικρότητι τοῦ στόματος, καὶ τῇ μαλακότητι τῆς γλώσσης, καὶ τῇ πρὸς πέψιν ἀμβλύτητι τοῦ πνεύματος, ἐξόμνυται τὴν σαρκοφαγίαν. Εἰ δὲ λέγεις πεφυκέναι σεαυτὸν ἐπὶ τοιαύτην ἐδωδὴν, ὃ βούλει φαγεῖν, πρῶτον αὐτὸς ἀπόκτεινον· ἀλλ' αὐτὸς διὰ σεαυτοῦ, μὴ χρησάμενος κοπίδι, μηδὲ τυσαίῳ τινὶ, μηδὲ πελέκει· ἀλλὰ ὡς λύκοι καὶ ἄρκτοι καὶ λέοντες αὐτοὶ ὡς ἐσθίουσι φονεύουσιν, ἄνελε δήγματι βοῦν· ἢ στόματι οὖν, ἢ ἄρνα, ἢ λαγωὸν, διάῤῥηξον, καὶ φάγε προσπεσὼν ἔτι ζῶντος ὡς ἐκεῖνα. . . . . Ἡμεῖς δὲ οὕτως ἐν τῷ μιαιφόνῳ τρυφῶμεν, ὥστε ὄψον τὸ κρέας προσαγορεύομεν, εἶτα ὄψων πρὸς αὐτὸ τὸ κρέας δεόμεθα, ἀναμιγνύντες ἔλαιον, οἶνον, μέλι, γάρον, ὄξος, ἡδύσμασι Συριακοῖς, Ἀῤῥαβικοῖς, ὥσπερ ὄντως νεκρὸν ἐνταφιάζοντες. Καὶ γὰρ οὕτως αὐτῶν διαλυθέντων καὶ μαλαχθέντων καὶ τρόπον τινὰ κρευσαπέντων ἔργον ἐστὶ τὴν πέψιν κρατῆσαι, καὶ διακρατηθείσης δὲ δεινὰς βαρύτητας ἐμποιεῖ καὶ νοσώδεις ἀπεψίας. . . . . Οὕτω τὸ πρῶτον ἄγριόν τι ζῳὸν ἐβρώθη καὶ κακοῦργον εἶτα ὄρνις τις ἢ ἰχθὺς εἱλκυστο· καὶ γευόμενον, οὕτω καὶ προεμελέτησαν ἐν ἐκείνοις τὸ νικοῦν ἐπὶ βοῦν ἐργάτην ἦλθε, καὶ τὸ κόσμον πρόβατον, καὶ τὸν οἰκουροῦν ἀλεκτρύονα· καὶ καταμικρὸν οὕτω τὴν ἁπληστίαν τονώσαντες, ἐπὶ σφαγὰς ἀνθρώπων, καὶ φόνους, καὶ πολέμους προῆλθον.

Πλούτ. περὶ τῆς Σαρκοφαγίας.

NOTE ON QUEEN MAB, BY MRS. SHELLEY.

SHELLEY was eighteen when he wrote *Queen Mab:* he never published it. When it was written, he had come to the decision that he was too young to be a "judge of controversies;" and he was desirous of acquiring "that sobriety of spirit which is the characteristic of true heroism." But he never doubted the truth or utility of his opinions; and, in printing and privately distributing *Queen Mab*, he believed that he should further their dissemination, without occasioning the mischief either to others or himself that might arise from publication. It is doubtful whether he would himself have admitted it into a collection of his works. His severe classical taste, refined by the constant study of the Greek poets, might have discovered defects that escape the ordinary reader; and the change his opinions underwent in many points would have prevented him from putting forth the speculations of his boyish days. But the poem is too beautiful in itself, and far too remarkable as the production of a boy of eighteen, to allow of its being passed over: besides that, having been frequently reprinted, the omission would be vain. In the former edition certain portions were left out, as shocking the general reader from the violence of their attack on religion. I myself had a painful feeling that such erasures might be looked upon as a mark of

disrespect towards the author, and am glad to have the opportunity of restoring them. The notes also are reprinted entire:—not because they are models of reasoning or lessons of truth, but because Shelley wrote them, and that all that a man at once so distinguished and so excellent ever did deserves to be preserved. The alterations his opinions underwent ought to be recorded, for they form his history.

A series of articles was published in the *New Monthly Magazine* during the autumn of the year 1832, written by a man of great talent, a fellow collegian and warm friend of Shelley: they describe admirably the state of his mind during his collegiate life. Inspired with ardour for the acquisition of knowledge; endowed with the keenest sensibility and with the fortitude of a martyr, Shelley came among his fellow-creatures, congregated for the purposes of education, like a spirit from another sphere; too delicately organized for the rough treatment man uses towards man, especially in the season of youth, and too resolute in carrying out his own sense of good and justice not to become a victim. To a devoted attachment to those he loved he added a determined resistance to oppression. Refusing to fag at Eton, he was treated with revolting cruelty by masters and boys: this roused instead of taming his spirit, and he rejected the duty of obedience when it was enforced by menaces and punishment. To aversion to the society of his fellow-creatures, such as he found them when collected together in societies, where one egged on the other to acts of tyranny, was joined the deepest sympathy and compassion: while the attachment he felt for individuals, and the admiration with which he regarded their powers and their virtues, led him to entertain a high opinion of the perfectibility of human nature; and he believed that all could reach the highest grade of moral improvement, did not the customs and prejudices of society foster evil passions, and excuse evil actions.

The oppression which, trembling at every nerve yet resolute to heroism, it was his ill fortune to encounter at school and at college, led him to dissent in all things from those whose arguments were blows, whose faith appeared to engender blame and hatred. "During my existence," he wrote to a friend in 1812, "I have incessantly speculated, thought, and read." His readings were not always well chosen; among them were the works of the French philosophers: as far as metaphysical argument went, he temporarily became a convert. At the same time, it was the cardinal article of his faith that, if men were but taught and induced to treat their fellows with love, charity, and equal rights, this earth would realize paradise. He looked upon religion, as it is professed, and above all practised, as hostile instead of friendly to the cultivation of those virtues which would make men brothers.

Can this be wondered at? At the age of seventeen, fragile in health and frame, of the purest habits in morals, full of devoted generosity and universal kindness, glowing with ardour to attain wisdom, resolved at every personal sacrifice to do right, burning with a desire for affection and sympathy,—he was treated as a reprobate, cast forth as a criminal.

The cause was that he was sincere; that he believed the opinions which he entertained to be true. And he loved truth with a martyr's love: he was ready to sacrifice station and fortune, and his dearest affections, at its shrine. The sacrifice was demanded from, and made by, a youth of seventeen. It is a singular fact in the history of society in the civilized nations of modern times that no false step is so irretrievable as one made in early youth. Older men, it is true, when they oppose their fellows and transgress ordinary rules, carry a certain prudence or hypocrisy as a shield along with them. But youth is rash; nor can it imagine, while asserting what it believes to be true, and doing what it believes to be right, that it should be denounced as vicious, and pursued as a criminal.

Shelley possessed a quality of mind which experience has shown me to be of the rarest occurrence among human beings: this was his *unworldliness*. The usual motives that rule men, prospects of present or future advantage, the rank and fortune of those around, the taunts and censures, or the praise, of those who were hostile to

him, had no influence whatever over his actions, and apparently none over his thoughts. It is difficult even to express the simplicity and directness of purpose that adorned him. Some few might be found in the history of mankind, and some one at least among his own friends, equally disinterested and scornful, even to severe personal sacrifices, of every baser motive. But no one, I believe, ever joined this noble but passive virtue to equal active endeavours for the benefit of his friends and mankind in general, and to equal power to produce the advantages he desired. The world's brightest gauds and its most solid advantages were of no worth in his eyes, when compared to the cause of what he considered truth, and the good of his fellow-creatures. Born in a position which, to his inexperienced mind, afforded the greatest facilities to practise the tenets he espoused, he boldly declared the use he would make of fortune and station, and enjoyed the belief that he should materially benefit his fellow-creatures by his actions; while, conscious of surpassing powers of reason and imagination, it is not strange that he should, even while so young, have believed that his written thoughts would tend to disseminate opinions which he believed conducive to the happiness of the human race.

If man were a creature devoid of passion, he might have said and done all this with quietness. But he was too enthusiastic, and too full of hatred of all the ills he witnessed, not to scorn danger. Various disappointments tortured, but could not tame, his soul. The more enmity he met, the more earnestly he became attached to his peculiar views, and hostile to those of the men who persecuted him.

He was animated to greater zeal by compassion for his fellow-creatures. His sympathy was excited by the misery with which the world is bursting. He witnessed the sufferings of the poor, and was aware of the evils of ignorance. He desired to induce every rich man to despoil himself of superfluity, and to create a brotherhood of property and service, and was ready to be the first to lay down the advantages of his birth. He was of too uncompromising a disposition to join any party. He did not in his youth look forward to gradual improvement: nay, in those days of intolerance, now almost forgotten, it seemed as easy to look forward to the sort of millennium of freedom and brotherhood which he thought the proper state of mankind as to the present reign of moderation and improvement. Ill-health made him believe that his race would soon be run; that a year or two was all he had of life. He desired that these years should be useful and illustrious. He saw, in a fervent call on his fellow-creatures to share alike the blessings of the creation, to love and serve each other, the noblest work that life and time permitted him. In this spirit he composed *Queen Mab*.

He was a lover of the wonderful and wild in literature; but had not fostered these tastes at their genuine sources—the romances and chivalry of the middle ages—but in the perusal of such German works as were current in those days. Under the influence of these, he, at the age of fifteen, wrote two short prose romances of slender merit. The sentiments and language were exaggerated, the composition imitative and poor. He wrote also a poem on the subject of Ahasuerus—being led to it by a German fragment he picked up, dirty and torn, in Lincoln's Inn Fields. This fell afterwards into other hands—and was considerably altered before it was printed. Our earlier English poetry was almost unknown to him. The love and knowledge of nature developed by Wordsworth—the lofty melody and mysterious beauty of Coleridge's poetry—and the wild fantastic machinery and gorgeous scenery adopted by Southey—composed his favourite reading; the rhythm of *Queen Mab* was founded on that of *Thalaba*, and the first few lines bear a striking resemblance in spirit, though not in idea, to the opening of that poem. His fertile imagination, and ear tuned to the finest sense of harmony, preserved him from imitation. Another of his favourite books was the poem of *Gebir* by Walter Savage Landor. From his boyhood he had a wonderful facility of versification which he carried into another language; and his Latin school-verses were composed with an ease and correctness that procured for

him prizes, and caused him to be resorted to by all his friends for help. He was, at the period of writing *Queen Mab*, a great traveller within the limits of England, Scotland, and Ireland. His time was spent among the loveliest scenes of these countries. Mountain and lake and forest were his home; the phenomena of Nature were his favourite study. He loved to enquire into their causes, and was addicted to pursuits of natural philosophy and chemistry, as far as they could be carried on as an amusement. These tastes gave truth and vivacity to his descriptions, and warmed his soul with that deep admiration for the wonders of Nature which constant association with her inspired.

He never intended to publish *Queen Mab* as it stands; but a few years after, when printing *Alastor*, he extracted a small portion which he entitled *The Dæmon of the World*. In this he changed somewhat the versification—and made other alterations scarcely to be called improvements.

Some years after, when in Italy, a bookseller published an edition of *Queen Mab* as it originally stood. Shelley was hastily written to by his friends, under the idea that, deeply injurious as the mere distribution of the poem had proved, the publication might awaken fresh persecutions. At the suggestion of these friends he wrote a letter on the subject, printed in the *Examiner* newspaper—with which I close this history of his earliest work.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE *EXAMINER*.

"SIR,

"Having heard that a poem entitled *Queen Mab* has been surreptitiously published in London, and that legal proceedings have been instituted against the publisher, I request the favour of your insertion of the following explanation of the affair, as it relates to me.

"A poem entitled *Queen Mab* was written by me at the age of eighteen, I may say in a sufficiently intemperate spirit—but even then was not intended for publication, and a few copies only were struck off, to be distributed among my personal friends. I have not seen this production for several years. I doubt not but that it is perfectly worthless in point of literary composition; and that, in all that concerns moral and political speculation, as well as in the subtler discriminations of metaphysical and religious doctrine, it is still more crude and immature. I am a devoted enemy to religious, political, and domestic oppression; and I regret this publication, not so much from literary vanity as because I fear it is better fitted to injure than to serve the sacred cause of freedom. I have directed *my solicitor* to apply to Chancery for an injunction to restrain the sale; but, after the precedent of Mr. Southey's *Wat Tyler* (a poem written, I believe, at the same age, and with the same unreflecting enthusiasm), with little hope of success.

"Whilst I exonerate myself from all share in having divulged opinions hostile to existing sanctions, under the form, whatever it may be, which they assume in this poem; it is scarcely necessary for me to protest against the system of inculcating the truth of Christianity or the excellence of Monarchy, however true or however excellent they may be, by such equivocal arguments as confiscation and imprisonment, and invective and slander, and the insolent violation of the most sacred ties of nature and society.

"SIR,

"I am your obliged and obedient servant,

"PERCY B. SHELLEY.

"*Pisa, June 22, 1821.*"

ALASTOR; OR, THE SPIRIT OF SOLITUDE.

Nondum amabam, et amare amabam, quærebam quid amarem amans amare.
Confess. St. August.

PREFACE.

THE poem entitled *Alastor* may be considered as allegorical of one of the most interesting situations of the human mind. It represents a youth of uncorrupted feelings and adventurous genius, led forth, by an imagination inflamed and purified through familiarity with all that is excellent and majestic, to the contemplation of the universe. He drinks deep of the fountains of knowledge, and is still insatiate. The magnificence and beauty of the external world sinks profoundly into the frame of his conceptions, and affords to their modifications a variety not to be exhausted. So long as it is possible for his desires to point towards objects thus infinite and unmeasured, he is joyous and tranquil and self-possessed. But the period arrives when these objects cease to suffice. His mind is at length suddenly awakened, and thirsts for intercourse with an intelligence similar to itself. He images to himself the Being whom he loves. Conversant with speculations of the sublimest and most perfect natures, the vision in which he embodies his own imaginations unites all of wonderful or wise or beautiful which the poet, the philosopher, or the lover, could depicture. The intellectual faculties, the imagination, the functions of sense, have their respective requisitions on the sympathy of corresponding powers in other human beings. The Poet is represented as uniting these requisitions, and attaching them to a single image. He seeks in vain for a prototype of his conception. Blasted by his disappointment, he descends to an untimely grave.

The picture is not barren of instruction to actual men. The Poet's self-centred seclusion was avenged by the Furies of an irresistible passion pursuing him to speedy ruin. But that power which strikes the luminaries of the world with sudden darkness and extinction, by awakening them to too exquisite a perception of its influences, dooms to a slow and poisonous decay those meaner spirits that dare to abjure its dominion. Their destiny is more abject and inglorious, as their delinquency is more contemptible and pernicious. They who, deluded by no generous error, instigated by no sacred thirst of doubtful knowledge, duped by no illustrious superstition, loving nothing on this earth, and cherishing no hopes beyond, yet keep aloof from sympathies with their kind, rejoicing neither in human joy nor mourning with human grief; these, and such as they, have their apportioned curse. They languish, because none feel with them their common nature. They are morally dead. They are neither friends, nor lovers, nor fathers, nor citizens of the world, nor benefactors of their country. Among those who attempt to exist without human sympathy, the pure and tender-hearted perish, through the intensity and passion of their search after its communities when the vacancy of their spirit suddenly makes itself felt. All else, selfish, blind, and torpid, are those unforeseeing multitudes who constitute, together with their own, the lasting misery and loneliness of the world. Those who love not their fellow-beings live unfruitful lives, and prepare for their old age a miserable grave.

> "The good die first,
> And those whose hearts are dry as summer's dust
> Burn to the socket."

December 14, 1815.

EARTH, Ocean, Air, beloved brotherhood!
If our great Mother has imbued my soul
With aught of natural piety to feel
Your love, and recompense the boon with mine;
If dewy morn, and odorous noon, and even,
With sunset and its gorgeous ministers,
And solemn midnight's tingling silentness;
If Autumn's hollow sighs in the sere wood,
And Winter robing with pure snow and crowns
Of starry ice the grey grass and bare boughs—
If Spring's voluptuous pantings when she breathes
Her first sweet kisses—have been dear to me;
If no bright bird, insect, or gentle beast,
I consciously have injured, but still loved
And cherished these my kindred;—then forgive
This boast, beloved brethren, and withdraw
No portion of your wonted favour now!

Mother of this unfathomable world,
Favour my solemn song! for I have loved
Thee ever, and thee only; I have watched
Thy shadow, and the darkness of thy steps,
And my heart ever gazes on the depth
Of thy deep mysteries. I have made my bed
In charnels and on coffins, where black Death
Keeps record of the trophies won from thee;
Hoping to still these obstinate questionings
Of thee and thine by forcing some lone ghost,
Thy messenger, to render up the tale
Of what we are. In lone and silent hours,
When night makes a weird sound of its own stillness,
Like an inspired and desperate alchemist
Staking his very life on some dark hope,
Have I mixed awful talk and asking looks
With my most innocent love; until strange tears,
Uniting with those breathless kisses, made
Such magic as compels the charmed night
To render up thy charge. And, though ne'er yet
Thou hast unveiled thy inmost sanctuary,
Enough from incommunicable dream,
And twilight phantasms, and deep noonday thought,
Has shone within me, that serenely now

And moveless (as a long-forgotten lyre
Suspended in the solitary dome
Of some mysterious and deserted fane)
I wait thy breath, Great Parent; that my strain
May modulate with murmurs of the air,
And motions of the forests and the sea,
And voice of living beings, and woven hymns
Of night and day, and the deep heart of man.

There was a Poet whose untimely tomb
No human hand with pious reverence reared,
But the charmed eddies of autumnal winds
Built o'er his mouldering bones a pyramid
Of mouldering leaves in the waste wilderness.
A lovely youth, no mourning maiden decked
With weeping flowers or votive cypress wreath
The lone couch of his everlasting sleep:
Gentle and brave and generous, no lorn bard
Breathed o'er his dark fate one melodious sigh:
He lived, he died, he sang, in solitude.
Strangers have wept to hear his passionate notes;
And virgins, as unknown he passed, have pined
And wasted for fond love of his wild eyes.
The fire of those soft orbs has ceased to burn,
And Silence, too enamoured of that voice,
Locks its mute music in her rugged cell.

By solemn vision and bright silver dream
His infancy was nurtured. Every sight
And sound from the vast earth and ambient air
Sent to his heart its choicest impulses.
The fountains of divine philosophy
Fled not his thirsting lips: and all of great
Or good or lovely which the sacred past
In truth or fable consecrates he felt
And knew. When early youth had past, he left
His cold fireside and alienated home,
To seek strange truths in undiscovered lands.
Many a wide waste and tangled wilderness
Has lured his fearless steps; and he has bought
With his sweet voice and eyes, from savage men,
His rest and food. Nature's most secret steps

He like her shadow has pursued, where'er
The red volcano overcanopies
Its fields of snow and pinnacles of ice
With burning smoke; or where bitumen lakes
On black bare pointed islets ever beat
With sluggish surge; or where the secret caves,
Rugged and dark, winding among the springs
Of fire and poison inaccessible
To avarice or pride, their starry domes
Of diamond and of gold expand above
Numberless and immeasurable halls,
Frequent with crystal column, and clear shrines
Of pearl, and thrones radiant with chrysolite.
Nor had that scene of ampler majesty
Than gems or gold, the varying roof of heaven
And the green earth, lost in his heart its claims
To love and wonder. He would linger long
In lonesome vales, making the wild his home;
Until the doves and squirrels would partake
From his innocuous hand his bloodless food,
Lured by the gentle meaning of his looks,—
And the wild antelope, that starts whene'er
The dry leaf rustles in the brake, suspend
Her timid steps, to gaze upon a form
More graceful than her own.
His wandering step,
Obedient to high thoughts, has visited
The awful ruins of the days of old:
Athens, and Tyre, and Balbec, and the waste
Where stood Jerusalem, the fallen towers
Of Babylon, the eternal pyramids,
Memphis and Thebes, and whatsoe'er of strange,
Sculptured on alabaster obelisk,
Or jasper tomb, or mutilated sphinx,
Dark Ethiopia in her desert hills
Conceals. Among the ruined temples there,
Stupendous columns, and wild images
Of more than man, where marble dæmons watch
The zodiac's brazen mystery, and dead men
Hang their mute thoughts on the mute walls around,
He lingered, poring on memorials
Of the world's youth; through the long burning day

Gazed on those speechless shapes; nor, when the moon
Filled the mysterious halls with floating shades,
Suspended he that task, but ever gazed
And gazed, till meaning on his vacant mind
Flashed like strong inspiration, and he saw
The thrilling secrets of the birth of time.

Meanwhile an Arab maiden brought his food,
Her daily portion, from her father's tent,
And spread her matting for his couch, and stole
From duties and repose to tend his steps:
Enamoured, yet not daring for deep awe
To speak her love:—and watched his nightly sleep,
Sleepless herself, to gaze upon his lips
Parted in slumber, whence the regular breath
Of innocent dreams arose. Then, when red morn
Made paler the pale moon, to her cold home,
Wildered and wan and panting, she returned.

The Poet, wandering on, through Arabie,
And Persia, and the wild Carmanian waste,
And o'er the aërial mountains which pour down
Indus and Oxus from their icy caves,
In joy and exultation held his way;
Till in the vale of Cachmire, far within
Its loneliest dell, where odorous plants entwine
Beneath the hollow rocks a natural bower,
Beside a sparkling rivulet he stretched
His languid limbs. A vision on his sleep
There came, a dream of hopes that never yet
Had flushed his cheek. He dreamed a veilèd maid
Sate near him, talking in low solemn tones.
Her voice was like the voice of his own soul
Heard in the calm of thought; its music long,
Like woven sounds of streams and breezes, held
His inmost sense suspended in its web
Of many-coloured woof and shifting hues.
Knowledge and truth and virtue were her theme,
And lofty hopes of divine liberty,
Thoughts the most dear to him, and poesy,
Himself a poet. Soon the solemn mood
Of her pure mind kindled through all her frame
A permeating fire. Wild numbers then

She raised, with voice stifled in tremulous sobs
Subdued by its own pathos: her fair hands
Were bare alone, sweeping from some strange harp
Strange symphony, and in their branching veins
The eloquent blood told an ineffable tale.
The beating of her heart was heard to fill
The pauses of her music, and her breath
Tumultuously accorded with those fits
Of intermitted song. Sudden she rose,
As if her heart impatiently endured
Its bursting burthen. At the sound he turned,
And saw, by the warm light of their own life,
Her glowing limbs beneath the sinuous veil
Of woven wind; her outspread arms now bare,
Her dark locks floating in the breath of night,
Her beamy bending eyes, her parted lips
Outstretched, and pale, and quivering eagerly.
His strong heart sank and sickened with excess
Of love. He reared his shuddering limbs, and quelled
His gasping breath, and spread his arms to meet
Her panting bosom:—she drew back awhile;
Then, yielding to the irresistible joy,
With frantic gesture and short breathless cry
Folded his frame in her dissolving arms.
Now blackness veiled his dizzy eyes, and night
Involved and swallowed up the vision; sleep,
Like a dark flood suspended in its course,
Rolled back its impulse on his vacant brain.

Roused by the shock, he started from his trance.
The cold white light of morning, the blue moon
Low in the west, the clear and garish hills,
The distinct valley and the vacant woods,
Spread round him where he stood. Whither have fled
The hues of heaven that canopied his bower
Of yesternight? the sounds that soothed his sleep,
The mystery and the majesty of earth,
The joy, the exultation? His wan eyes
Gaze on the empty scene as vacantly
As ocean's moon looks on the moon in heaven.
The Spirit of sweet Human Love has sent
A vision to the sleep of him who spurned

Her choicest gifts. He eagerly pursues
Beyond the realms of dream that fleeting shade;
He overleaps the bounds. Alas! alas!
Were limbs and breath and being intertwined
Thus treacherously? Lost, lost, for ever lost
In the wide pathless desert of dim Sleep,
That beautiful shape! Does the dark gate of Death
Conduct to thy mysterious paradise,
O Sleep? Does the bright arch of rainbow clouds,
And pendent mountains seen in the calm lake,
Lead only to a black and watery depth,—
While Death's blue vault with loathliest vapours hung,
Where every shade which the foul grave exhales
Hides its dead eye from the detested day,
Conducts, O Sleep, to thy delightful realms?
This doubt with sudden tide flowed on his heart:
The insatiate hope which it awakened stung
His brain even like despair.

While daylight held
The sky, the Poet kept mute conference
With his still soul. At night the passion came,
Like the fierce fiend of a distempered dream,
And shook him from his rest, and led him forth
Into the darkness.—As an eagle, grasped
In folds of the green serpent, feels her breast
Burn with the poison, and precipitates,
Through night and day, tempest and calm and cloud,
Frantic with dizzying anguish, her blind flight
O'er the wide aëry wilderness: thus, driven
By the bright shadow of that lovely dream,
Beneath the cold glare of the desolate night,
Through tangled swamps and deep precipitous dells,
Startling with careless step the moonlight snake,
He fled. Red morning dawned upon his flight,
Shedding the mockery of its vital hues
Upon his cheek of death. He wandered on,
Till vast Aornos, seen from Petra's steep,
Hung o'er the low horizon like a cloud;
Through Balk, and where the desolated tombs
Of Parthian kings scatter to every wind
Their wasting dust, wildly he wandered on,
Day after day, a weary waste of hours,

Bearing within his life the brooding care
That ever fed on its decaying flame.
And now his limbs were lean; his scattered hair,
Sered by the autumn of strange suffering,
Sung dirges in the wind; his listless hand
Hung like dead bone within its withered skin;
Life, and the lustre that consumed it, shone,
As in a furnace burning secretly,
From his dark eyes alone. The cottagers,
Who ministered with human charity
His human wants, beheld with wondering awe
Their fleeting visitant. The mountaineer,
Encountering on some dizzy precipice
That spectral form, deemed that the Spirit of Wind,
With lightning eyes, and eager breath, and feet
Disturbing not the drifted snow, had paused
In his career. The infant would conceal
His troubled visage in his mother's robe
In terror at the glare of those wild eyes,
To remember their strange light in many a dream
Of after times. But youthful maidens, taught
By nature, would interpret half the woe
That wasted him, would call him with false names
Brother, and friend, would press his pallid hand
At parting, and watch, dim through tears, the path
Of his departure from their father's door.

At length upon the lone Chorasmian shore
He paused, a wide and melancholy waste
Of putrid marshes. A strong impulse urged
His steps to the sea-shore. A swan was there,
Beside a sluggish stream among the reeds.
It rose as he approached, and, with strong wings
Scaling the upward sky, bent its bright course
High over the immeasurable main.
His eyes pursued its flight:—"Thou hast a home,
Beautiful bird! thou voyagest to thine home,
Where thy sweet mate will twine her downy neck
With thine, and welcome thy return with eyes
Bright in the lustre of their own fond joy.
And what am I that I should linger here,
With voice far sweeter than thy dying notes,

Spirit more vast than thine, frame more attuned
To beauty, wasting these surpassing powers
In the deaf air, to the blind earth, and heaven
That echoes not my thoughts?" A gloomy smile
Of desperate hope wrinkled his quivering lips.
For Sleep, he knew, kept most relentlessly
Its precious charge; and silent Death exposed,
Faithless perhaps as Sleep, a shadowy lure,
With doubtful smile mocking its own strange charms.

Startled by his own thoughts, he looked around:
There was no fair fiend near him, not a sight
Or sound of awe but in his own deep mind.
A little shallop floating near the shore
Caught the impatient wandering of his gaze.
It had been long abandoned, for its sides
Gaped wide with many a rift, and its frail joints
Swayed with the undulations of the tide.
A restless impulse urged him to embark,
And meet lone Death on the drear ocean's waste;
For well he knew that mighty shadow loves
The slimy caverns of the populous deep.

The day was fair and sunny: sea and sky
Drank its inspiring radiance, and the wind
Swept strongly from the shore, blackening the waves.
Following his eager soul, the wanderer
Leapt in the boat; he spread his cloak aloft
On the bare mast, and took his lonely seat,
And felt the boat speed o'er the tranquil sea
Like a torn cloud before the hurricane.

As one that in a silver vision floats
Obedient to the sweep of odorous winds
Upon resplendent clouds, so rapidly
Along the dark and ruffled waters fled
The straining boat. A whirlwind swept it on,
With fierce gusts and precipitating force,
Through the white ridges of the chafèd sea.
The waves arose. Higher and higher still
Their fierce necks writhed beneath the tempest's scourge,
Like serpents struggling in a vulture's grasp.
Calm, and rejoicing in the fearful war

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Of wave ruining on wave, and blast on blast
Descending, and black flood on whirlpool driven
With dark obliterating course, he sate:
As if their genii were the ministers
Appointed to conduct him to the light
Of those beloved eyes, the Poet sate
Holding the steady helm. Evening came on;
The beams of sunset hung their rainbow hues
High 'mid the shifting domes of sheeted spray
That canopied his path o'er the waste deep;
Twilight, ascending slowly from the east,
Entwined in duskier wreaths her braided locks
O'er the fair front and radiant eyes of Day;
Night followed, clad with stars. On every side
More horribly the multitudinous streams
Of ocean's mountainous waste to mutual war
Rushed in dark tumult thundering, as to mock
The calm and spangled sky. The little boat
Still fled before the storm; still fled, like foam
Down the steep cataract of a wintry river;
Now pausing on the edge of the riven wave;
Now leaving far behind the bursting mass,
That fell, convulsing ocean:—safely fled—
As if that frail and wasted human form
Had been an elemental god.
At midnight
The moon arose: and lo! the etherial cliffs
Of Caucasus, whose icy summits shone
Among the stars like sunlight, and around
Whose caverned base the whirlpools and the waves,
Bursting and eddying irresistibly,
Rage and resound for ever.—Who shall save?—
The boat fled on,—the boiling torrent drove,—
The crags closed round with black and jagged arms,
The shattered mountain overhung the sea;
And faster still, beyond all human speed,
Suspended on the sweep of the smooth wave,
The little boat was driven. A cavern there
Yawned, and amid its slant and winding depths
Engulfed the rushing sea. The boat fled on
With unrelaxing speed. "Vision and Love!"
The Poet cried aloud, "I have beheld

The path of thy departure. Sleep and Death
Shall not divide us long."
The boat pursued
The windings of the cavern. Daylight shone
At length upon that gloomy river's flow.
Now, where the fiercest war among the waves
Is calm, on the unfathomable stream
The boat moved slowly. Where the mountain, riven,
Exposed those black depths to the azure sky,
Ere yet the flood's enormous volume fell
Even to the base of Caucasus with sound
That shook the everlasting rocks, the mass
Filled with one whirlpool all that ample chasm;
Stair above stair the eddying waters rose,
Circling immeasurably fast, and laved
With alternating dash the gnarlèd roots
Of mighty trees that stretched their giant arms
In darkness over it. I' the midst was left,
Reflecting yet distorting every cloud,
A pool of treacherous and tremendous calm.
Seized by the sway of the ascending stream,
With dizzy swiftness, round, and round, and round,
Ridge after ridge the straining boat arose;
Till on the verge of the extremest curve,
Where through an opening of the rocky bank
The waters overflow, and a smooth spot
Of glassy quiet 'mid those battling tides
Is left, the boat paused shuddering. Shall it sink
Down the abyss? shall the reverting stress
Of that resistless gulf embosom it?
Now shall it fall?—A wandering stream of wind,
Breathed from the west, has caught the expanded sail;
And lo! with gentle motion, between banks
Of mossy slope, and on a placid stream,
Beneath a woven grove, it sails; and, hark!
The ghastly torrent mingles its far roar
With the breeze murmuring in the musical woods.
Where the embowering trees recede, and leave
A little space of green expanse, the cove
Is closed by meeting banks, whose yellow flowers
For ever gaze on their own drooping eyes
Reflected in the crystal calm. The wave

Of the boat's motion marred their pensive task,
Which nought but vagrant bird, or wanton wind,
Or falling spear-grass, or their own decay,
Had e'er disturbed before. The Poet longed
To deck with their bright hues his withered hair;
But on his heart its solitude returned,
And he forbore. Not the strong impulse hid
In those flushed cheeks, bent eyes, and shadowy frame,
Had yet performed its ministry: it hung
Upon his life, as lightning in a cloud
Gleams, hovering ere it vanish, ere the floods
Of night close over it.

The noonday sun
Now shone upon the forest, one vast mass
Of mingling shade, whose brown magnificence
A narrow vale embosoms. There, huge caves,
Scooped in the dark base of those aëry rocks,
Mocking its moans respond and roar for ever.
The meeting boughs and implicated leaves
Wove twilight o'er the Poet's path, as, led
By love, or dream, or god, or mightier Death,
He sought in Nature's dearest haunt, some bank,
Her cradle, and his sepulchre. More dark
And dark the shades accumulate. The oak,
Expanding its immense and knotty arms,
Embraces the light beech. The pyramids
Of the tall cedar, overarching, frame
Most solemn domes within; and far below,
Like clouds suspended in an emerald sky,
The ash and the acacia floating hang,
Tremulous and pale. Like restless serpents clothed
In rainbow and in fire, the parasites,
Starred with ten thousand blossoms, flow around
The grey trunks; and, as gamesome infants' eyes,
With gentle meanings and most innocent wiles,
Fold their beams round the hearts of those that love,
These twine their tendrils with the wedded boughs,
Uniting their close union; the woven leaves
Make network of the dark-blue light of day
And the night's noontide clearness, mutable
As shapes in the weird clouds. Soft mossy lawns
Beneath these canopies extend their swells,

Fragrant with perfumed herbs, and eyed with blooms
Minute yet beautiful. One darkest glen
Sends from its woods of musk-rose twined with jasmine
A soul-dissolving odour, to invite
To some more lovely mystery. Through the dell,
Silence and Twilight here, twin sisters, keep
Their noonday watch, and sail among the shades,
Like vaporous shapes half-seen. Beyond, a well,
Dark, gleaming, and of most translucent wave,
Images all the woven boughs above,
And each depending leaf, and every speck
Of azure sky darting between their chasms;
Nor aught else in the liquid mirror laves
Its portraiture, but some inconstant star
Between one foliaged lattice twinkling fair,
Or painted bird sleeping beneath the moon,
Or gorgeous insect floating motionless,
Unconscious of the day, ere yet his wings
Have spread their glories to the gaze of noon.

Hither the Poet came. His eyes beheld
Their own wan light through the reflected lines
Of his thin hair, distinct in the dark depth
Of that still fountain; as the human heart,
Gazing in dreams over the gloomy grave,
Sees its own treacherous likeness there. He heard
The motion of the leaves; the grass that sprung
Startled, and glanced and trembled, even to feel
An unaccustomed presence; and the sound
Of the sweet brook that from the secret springs
Of that dark fountain rose. A Spirit seemed
To stand beside him—clothed in no bright robes
Of shadowy silver or enshrining light
Borrowed from aught the visible world affords
Of grace or majesty or mystery;
But,—undulating woods, and silent well,
And rippling rivulet, and evening gloom
Now deepening the dark shades, for speech assuming,—
Held commune with him, as if he and it
Were all that was. Only—when his regard
Was raised by intense pensiveness—two eyes,
Two starry eyes, hung in the gloom of thought,

And seemed with their serene and azure smiles
To beckon him.
Obedient to the light
That shone within his soul, he went, pursuing
The windings of the dell.—The rivulet,
Wanton and wild, through many a green ravine
Beneath the forest flowed. Sometimes it fell
Among the moss, with hollow harmony
Dark and profound. Now on the polished stones
It danced; like childhood, laughing as it went:
Then, through the plain in tranquil wanderings crept,
Reflecting every herb and drooping bud
That overhung its quietness.—"O stream,
Whose source is inaccessibly profound,
Whither do thy mysterious waters tend?
Thou imagest my life. Thy darksome stillness,
Thy dazzling waves, thy loud and hollow gulfs,
Thy searchless fountain and invisible course,
Have each their type in me. And the wide sky
And measureless ocean may declare as soon
What oozy cavern or what wandering cloud
Contains thy waters as the universe
Tell where these living thoughts reside, when, stretched
Upon thy flowers, my bloodless limbs shall waste
I' the passing wind!"
Beside the grassy shore
Of the small stream he went; he did impress
On the green moss his tremulous step, that caught
Strong shuddering from his burning limbs. As one
Roused by some joyous madness from the couch
Of fever, he did move; yet not (like him)
Forgetful of the grave, where, when the flame
Of his frail exultation shall be spent,
He must descend. With rapid steps he went
Beneath the shade of trees, beside the flow
Of the wild babbling rivulet; and now
The forest's solemn canopies were changed
For the uniform and lightsome evening sky.
Grey rocks did peep from the spare moss, and stemmed
The struggling brook; tall spires of windlestrae
Threw their thin shadows down the rugged slope;
And nought but gnarlèd roots of ancient pines,

Branchless and blasted, clenched with grasping roots
The unwilling soil. A gradual change was here,
Yet ghastly. For, as fast years flow away,
The smooth brow gathers, and the hair grows thin
And white, and, where irradiate dewy eyes
Had shone, gleam stony orbs: so from his steps
Bright flowers departed, and the beautiful shade
Of the green groves, with all their odorous winds
And musical motions. Calm he still pursued
The stream, that with a larger volume now
Rolled through the labyrinthine dell, and there
Fretted a path through its descending curves
With its wintry speed. On every side now rose
Rocks which in unimaginable forms
Lifted their black and barren pinnacles
In the light of evening, and (its precipice
Obscuring) the ravine disclosed above,
'Mid toppling stones, black gulfs, and yawning caves
Whose windings gave ten thousand various tongues
To the loud stream. Lo! where the pass expands
Its stony jaws, the abrupt mountain breaks,
And seems with its accumulated crags
To overhang the world: for wide expand,
Beneath the wan stars and descending moon,
Islanded seas, blue mountains, mighty streams,
Dim tracks and vast robed in the lustrous gloom
Of leaden-coloured even, and fiery hills
Mingling their flames with twilight on the verge
Of the remote horizon. The near scene,
In naked and severe simplicity,
Made contrast with the universe. A pine,
Rock-rooted, stretched athwart the vacancy
Its swinging boughs, to each inconstant blast
Yielding one only response at each pause,
In most familiar cadence,—with the howl,
The thunder, and the hiss, of homeless streams,
Mingling its solemn song; whilst the broad river,
Foaming and hurrying o'er its rugged path,
Fell into that immeasurable void,
Scattering its waters to the passing winds.

Yet the grey precipice and solemn pine

And torrent were not all;—one silent nook
Was there. Even on the edge of that vast mountain,
Upheld by knotty roots and fallen rocks,
It overlooked in its serenity
The dark earth and the bending vault of stars.
It was a tranquil spot, that seemed to smile
Even in the lap of horror. Ivy clasped
The fissured stones with its entwining arms,
And did embower, with leaves forever green
And berries dark, the smooth and even space
Of its inviolated floor; and here
The children of the autumnal whirlwind bore
In wanton sport those bright leaves whose decay—
Red, yellow, or etherially pale—
Rivals the pride of summer. 'Tis the haunt
Of every gentle wind whose breath can teach
The wilds to love tranquillity. One step,
One human step alone, has ever broken
The stillness of its solitude—one voice
Alone inspired its echoes;—even that voice
Which hither came, floating among the winds,
And led the loveliest among human forms
To make their wild haunts the depository
Of all the grace and beauty that endued
Its motions, render up its majesty,
Scatter its music on the unfeeling storm,
And to the damp leaves and blue cavern mould,
Nurses of rainbow flowers and branching moss,
Commit the colours of that varying cheek,
That snowy breast, those dark and drooping eyes.

The dim and horned moon hung low, and poured
A sea of lustre on the horizon's verge
That overflowed its mountains. Yellow mist
Filled the unbounded atmosphere, and drank
Wan moonlight even to fullness: not a star
Shone, not a sound was heard; the very Winds,
Danger's grim playmates, on that precipice
Slept, clasped in his embrace.—O storm of Death,
Whose sightless speed divides this sullen night!
And thou, colossal Skeleton, that, still
Guiding its irresistible career,

In thy devastating omnipotence,
Art king of this frail world! from the red field
Of slaughter, from the reeking hospital,
The patriot's sacred couch, the snowy bed
Of innocence, the scaffold and the throne,
A mighty voice invokes thee! Ruin calls
His brother Death! A rare and regal prey
He hath prepared, prowling around the world;
Glutted with which, thou mayst repose, and men
Go to their graves like flowers or creeping worms,
Nor ever more offer at thy dark shrine
The unheeded tribute of a broken heart.

When on the threshold of the green recess
The wanderer's footsteps fell, he knew that death
Was on him. Yet a little, ere it fled,
Did he resign his high and holy soul
To images of the majestic past,
That paused within his passive being now,
Like winds that bear sweet music when they breathe
Through some dim latticed chamber. He did place
His pale lean hand upon the rugged trunk
Of the old pine. Upon an ivied stone
Reclined his languid head, his limbs did rest,
Diffused and motionless, on the smooth brink
Of that obscurest chasm;—and thus he lay,
Surrendering to their final impulses
The hovering powers of life. Hope and despair,
The torturers, slept: no mortal pain or fear
Marred his repose; the influxes of sense,
And his own being unalloyed by pain,
Yet feebler and more feeble, calmly fed
The stream of thought, till he lay breathing there
At peace, and faintly smiling. His last sight
Was the great moon, which o'er the western line
Of the wide world her mighty horn suspended,
With whose dun beams inwoven darkness seemed
To mingle. Now upon the jagged hills
It rests; and still, as the divided frame
Of the vast meteor sunk, the Poet's blood,
That ever beat in mystic sympathy
With nature's ebb and flow, grew feebler still.

And, when two lessening points of light alone
Gleamed through the darkness, the alternate gasp
Of his faint respiration scarce did stir
The stagnate night:—till the minutest ray
Was quenched, the pulse yet lingered in his heart.
It paused—it fluttered. But, when heaven remained
Utterly black, the murky shades involved
An image silent, cold, and motionless,
As their own voiceless earth and vacant air.
Even as a vapour, fed with golden beams
That ministered on sunlight ere the west
Eclipses it, was now that wondrous frame—
No sense, no motion, no divinity—
A fragile lute, on whose harmonious strings
The breath of heaven did wander—a bright stream
Once fed with many-voiced waves (a dream
Of youth which night and time have quenched for ever),
Still, dark, and dry, and unremembered now.

Oh for Medea's wondrous alchemy,
Which, wheresoe'er it fell, made the earth gleam
With bright flowers, and the wintry boughs exhale
From vernal blooms fresh fragrance! Oh that God,
Profuse of poisons, would concede the chalice
Which but one living man has drained, who now,
Vessel of deathless wrath, a slave that feels
No proud exemption in the blighting curse
He bears, over the world wanders for ever,
Lone as incarnate death! Oh that the dream
Of dark magician in his visioned cave,
Raking the cinders of a crucible
For life and power even when his feeble hand
Shakes in its last decay, were the true law
Of this so lovely world!—But thou art fled,
Like some frail exhalation which the dawn
Robes in its golden beams,—ah! thou hast fled!
The brave, the gentle, and the beautiful,
The child of grace and genius! Heartless things
Are done and said i' the world, and many worms
And beasts and men live on, and mighty earth,
From sea and mountain, city and wilderness,
In vesper low or joyous orison,

Lifts still its solemn voice :—but thou art fled—
Thou canst no longer know or love the shapes
Of this phantasmal scene, who have to thee
Been purest ministers, who are, alas!
Now thou art not! Upon those pallid lips,
So sweet even in their silence, on those eyes
That image sleep in death, upon that form
Yet safe from the worm's outrage, let no tear
Be shed—not even in thought. Nor, when those hues
Are gone, and those divinest lineaments,
Worn by the senseless wind, shall live alone
In the frail pauses of this simple strain,
Let not high verse mourning the memory.
Of that which is no more, or painting's woe,
Or sculpture, speak in feeble imagery
Their own cold powers. Art and eloquence,
And all the shows o' the world, are frail and vain
To weep a loss that turns their lights to shade.
It is a woe "too deep for tears" when all
Is reft at once, when some surpassing Spirit,
Whose light adorned the world around it, leaves
Those who remain behind, not sobs or groans,
The passionate tumult of a clinging hope,—
But pale despair and cold tranquillity,
Nature's vast frame, the web of human things,
Birth and the grave, that are not as they were.

NOTE ON ALASTOR, BY MRS SHELLEY.

Alastor is written in a very different tone from *Queen Mab*. In the latter, Shelley poured out all the cherished speculations of his youth—all the irrepressible emotions of sympathy, censure, and hope, to which the present suffering, and what he considers the proper destiny, of his fellow-creatures gave birth. *Alastor*, on the contrary, contains an individual interest only. A very few years, with their attendant events, had checked the ardour of Shelley's hopes; though he still thought them well grounded, and that to advance their fulfilment was the noblest task man could achieve.

This is neither the time nor place to speak of the misfortunes that chequered his life. It will be sufficient to say that, in all he did, he at the time of doing it believed himself justified to his own conscience; while the various ills of poverty and loss of friends brought home to him the sad realities of life. Physical suffering had also considerable influence in causing him to turn his eyes inward; inclining him rather to brood over the thoughts and emotions of his own soul than to glance abroad, and

to make, as in *Queen Mab*, the whole universe the object and subject of his song. In the Spring of 1815 an eminent physician pronounced that he was dying rapidly of a consumption; abscesses were formed on his lungs, and he suffered acute spasms. Suddenly a complete change took place; and, though through life he was a martyr to pain and debility, every symptom of pulmonary disease vanished. His nerves, which nature had formed sensitive to an unexampled degree, were rendered still more susceptible by the state of his health.

As soon as the peace of 1814 had opened the Continent, he went abroad. He visited some of the more magnificent scenes of Switzerland, and returned to England from Lucerne, by the Reuss and the Rhine. This river navigation enchanted him. In his favourite poem of *Thalaba*, his imagination had been excited by a description of such a voyage. In the summer of 1815, after a tour along the southern coast of Devonshire and a visit to Clifton, he rented a house on Bishopgate Heath, on the borders of Windsor Forest, where he enjoyed several months of comparative health and tranquil happiness. The later summer months were warm and dry. Accompanied by a few friends, he visited the source of the Thames, making a voyage in a wherry from Windsor to Cricklade. His beautiful stanzas in the churchyard of Lechlade were written on that occasion. *Alastor* was composed on his return. He spent his days under the oak-shades of Windsor Great Park; and the magnificent woodland was a fitting study to inspire the various descriptions of forest scenery we find in the poem.

None of Shelley's poems is more characteristic than this. The solemn spirit that reigns throughout, the worship of the majesty of nature, the broodings of a poet's heart in solitude—the mingling of the exulting joy which the various aspect of the visible universe inspires with the sad and struggling pangs which human passion imparts—give a touching interest to the whole. The death which he had often contemplated during the last months as certain and near he here represented in such colours as had, in his lonely musings, soothed his soul to peace. The versification sustains the solemn spirit which breathes throughout: it is peculiarly melodious. The poem ought rather to be considered didactic than narrative: it was the outpouring of his own emotions, embodied in the purest form he could conceive, painted in the ideal hues which his brilliant imagination inspired, and softened by the recent anticipation of death.

THE REVOLT OF ISLAM.

A POEM IN TWELVE CANTOS.

Ὅσαις δὲ βροτὸν ἔθνος ἀγλαίαις ἀπτόμεσθα
Περαίνει πρὸς ἔσχατον
Πλόον· ναυσὶ δ' οὔτε πεζὸς ἰὼν ἂν εὕροις
Ἐς ὑπερβορέων ἀγῶνα θαυματὰν ὁδόν.
Πινδ. Πυθ. x.

PREFACE.

THE poem which I now present to the world is an attempt from which I scarcely dare to expect success, and in which a writer of established fame might fail without disgrace. It is an experiment on the temper of the public mind, as to how far a thirst for a happier condition of moral and political society survives, among the enlightened and refined, the tempests which have shaken the age in which we live. I have sought to enlist the harmony of metrical language, the etherial combinations of

the fancy, the rapid and subtle transitions of human passion, all those elements which essentially compose a poem, in the cause of a liberal and comprehensive morality; and in the view of kindling within the bosoms of my readers a virtuous enthusiasm for those doctrines of liberty and justice, that faith and hope in something good, which neither violence nor misrepresentation nor prejudice can ever totally extinguish among mankind.

For this purpose, I have chosen a story of human passion in its most universal character, diversified with moving and romantic adventures, and appealing, in contempt of all artificial opinions or institutions, to the common sympathies of every human breast. I have made no attempt to recommend the motives which I would substitute for those at present governing mankind, by methodical and systematic argument. I would only awaken the feelings; so that the reader should see the beauty of true virtue, and be incited to those enquiries which have led to my moral and political creed, and that of some of the sublimest intellects in the world. The poem, therefore, (with the exception of the first canto, which is purely introductory) is narrative, not didactic. It is a succession of pictures illustrating the growth and progress of individual mind aspiring after excellence, and devoted to the love of mankind; its influence in refining and making pure the most daring and uncommon impulses of the imagination, the understanding, and the senses; its impatience at "all the oppressions that are done under the sun:" its tendency to awaken public hope, and to enlighten and improve mankind; the rapid effects of the application of that tendency; the awakening of an immense nation, from their slavery and degradation, to a true sense of moral dignity and freedom; the bloodless dethronement of their oppressors, and the unveiling of the religious frauds by which they had been deluded into submission; the tranquillity of successful patriotism, and the universal toleration and benevolence of true philanthropy; the treachery and barbarity of hired soldiers; vice not the object of punishment and hatred, but kindness and pity; the faithlessness of tyrants; the confederacy of the rulers of the world, and the restoration of the expelled dynasty by foreign arms; the massacre and extermination of the patriots, and the victory of established power; the consequences of legitimate despotism,—civil war, famine, plague, superstition, and an utter extinction of the domestic affections; the judicial murder of the advocates of liberty; the temporary triumph of oppression, that secure earnest of its final and inevitable fall; the transient nature of ignorance and error, and the eternity of genius and virtue. Such is the series of delineations of which the poem consists. And, if the lofty passions with which it has been my scope to distinguish this story shall not excite in the reader a generous impulse, an ardent thirst for excellence, an interest profound and strong such as belongs to no meaner desires—let not the failure be imputed to a natural unfitness for human sympathy in these sublime and animating themes. It is the business of the Poet to communicate to others the pleasure and the enthusiasm arising out of those images and feelings in the vivid presence of which within his own mind consists at once his inspiration and his reward.

The panic which, like an epidemic transport, seized upon all classes of men during the excesses consequent upon the French Revolution, is gradually giving place to sanity. It has ceased to be believed that whole generations of mankind ought to consign themselves to a hopeless inheritance of ignorance and misery, because a nation of men who had been dupes and slaves for centuries were incapable of conducting themselves with the wisdom and tranquillity of freemen so soon as some of their fetters were partially loosened. That their conduct could not have been marked by any other characters than ferocity and thoughtlessness is the historical fact from which liberty derives all its recommendations, and falsehood the worst features of its deformity. There is a reflux in the tide of human things which bears the shipwrecked hopes of men into a secure haven after the storms are past. Methinks, those who now live have survived an age of despair.

The French Revolution may be considered as one of those manifestations of a

general state of feeling among civilized mankind produced by a defect of correspondence between the knowledge existing in society and the improvement or gradual abolition of political institutions. The year 1788 may be assumed as the epoch of one of the most important crises produced by this feeling. The sympathies connected with that event extended to every bosom. The most generous and amiable natures were those which participated the most extensively in these sympathies. But such a degree of unmingled good was expected as it was impossible to realize. If the Revolution had been in every respect prosperous, then misrule and superstition would lose half their claims to our abhorrence, as fetters which the captive can unlock with the slightest motion of his fingers, and which do not eat with poisonous rust into the soul. The revulsion occasioned by the atrocities of the demagogues, and the re-establishment of successive tyrannies in France, was terrible, and felt in the remotest corner of the civilized world. Could *they* listen to the plea of reason who had groaned under the calamities of a social state according to the provisions of which one man riots in luxury whilst another famishes for want of bread? Can he who the day before was a trampled slave suddenly become liberal-minded, forbearing, and independent? This is the consequence of the habits of a state of society to be produced by resolute perseverance and indefatigable hope, and long-suffering and long-believing courage, and the systematic efforts of generations of men of intellect and virtue. Such is the lesson which experience teaches now. But, on the first reverses of hope in the progress of French liberty, the sanguine eagerness for good overleaped the solution of these questions, and for a time extinguished itself in the unexpectedness of their result. Thus, many of the most ardent and tender-hearted of the worshipers of public good have been morally ruined by what a partial glimpse of the events they deplored appeared to show as the melancholy desolation of all their cherished hopes. Hence gloom and misanthropy have become the characteristics of the age in which we live, the solace of a disappointment that unconsciously finds relief only in the wilful exaggeration of its own despair. This influence has tainted the literature of the age with the hopelessness of the minds from which it flows. Metaphysics,* and enquiries into moral and political science, have become little else than vain attempts to revive exploded superstitions, or sophisms like those† of Mr. Malthus, calculated to lull the oppressors of mankind into a security of everlasting triumph. Our works of fiction and poetry have been overshadowed by the same infectious gloom. But mankind appear to me to be emerging from their trance. I am aware, methinks, of a slow, gradual, silent change. In that belief I have composed the following poem.

I do not presume to enter into competition with our greatest contemporary poets. Yet I am unwilling to tread in the footsteps of any who have preceded me. I have sought to avoid the imitation of any style of language or versification peculiar to the original minds of which it is the character; designing that, even if what I have produced be worthless, it should still be properly my own. Nor have I permitted any system relating to mere words to divert the attention of the reader, from whatever interest I may have succeeded in creating, to my own ingenuity in contriving,—to disgust him according to the rules of criticism. I have simply clothed my thoughts in what appeared to me the most obvious and appropriate language. A person familiar with nature, and with the most celebrated productions of the human mind,

* I ought to except Sir W. Drummond's *Academical Questions*; a volume of very acute and powerful metaph[illegible]

† It is remarkable, as a [illegible] hope, that Mr. Malthus has assigned, in the later [illegible] dominion to moral restraint over the principle of [illegible] answers all the inferences from his doctrine unfavour[illegible] reduces the *Essay on Population* to a comme[illegible] rableness of *Political Justice*.

can scarcely err in following the instinct, with respect to selection of language, produced by that familiarity.

There is an education peculiarly fitted for a poet, without which genius and sensibility can hardly fill the circle of their capacities. No education, indeed, can entitle to this appellation a dull and unobservant mind, or one, though neither dull nor unobservant, in which the channels of communication between thought and expression have been obstructed or closed. How far it is my fortune to belong to either of the latter classes I cannot know. I aspire to be something better. The circumstances of my accidental education have been favourable to this ambition. I have been familiar from boyhood with mountains, and lakes, and the sea, and the solitude of forests: Danger, which sports upon the brink of precipices, has been my playmate. I have trodden the glaciers of the Alps, and lived under the eye of Mont Blanc. I have been a wanderer among distant fields. I have sailed down mighty rivers, and seen the sun rise and set, and the stars come forth, whilst I have sailed night and day down a rapid stream among mountains. I have seen populous cities, and have watched the passions which rise and spread, and sink and change, amongst assembled multitudes of men. I have seen the theatre of the more visible ravages of tyranny and war; cities and villages reduced to scattered groups of black and roofless houses, and the naked inhabitants sitting famished upon their desolated thresholds. I have conversed with living men of genius. The poetry of ancient Greece and Rome, and modern Italy, and our own country, has been to me, like external nature, a passion and an enjoyment. Such are the sources from which the materials for the imagery of my poem have been drawn. I have considered Poetry in its most comprehensive sense; and have read the poets and the historians and the metaphysicians* whose writings have been accessible to me—and have looked upon the beautiful and majestic scénery of the earth—as common sources of those elements which it is the province of the Poet to embody and combine. Yet the experience and the feelings to which I refer do not in themselves constitute men poets, but only prepare them to be the auditors of those who are. How far I shall be found to possess that more essential attribute of poetry, the power of awakening in others sensations like those which animate my own bosom, is that which, to speak sincerely, I know not; and which, with an acquiescent and contented spirit, I expect to be taught by the effect which I shall produce upon those whom I now address.

I have avoided, as I have said before, the imitation of any contemporary style. But there must be a resemblance, which does not depend upon their own will, between all the writers of any particular age. They cannot escape from subjection to a common influence which arises out of an infinite combination of circumstances belonging to the times in which they live; though each is in a degree the author of the very influence by which his being is thus pervaded. Thus, the tragic poets of the age of Pericles; the Italian revivers of ancient learning; those mighty intellects of our own country that succeeded the Reformation, the translators of the Bible, Shakspeare, Spenser, the dramatists of the reign of Elizabeth, and Lord Bacon;† the colder spirits of the interval that succeeded;—all resemble each other, and differ from every other in their several classes. In this view of things, Ford can no more be called the imitator of Shakspeare than Shakspeare the imitator of Ford. There were perhaps few other points of resemblance between these two men than that which the universal and inevitable influence of their age produced. And this is an influence which neither the meanest scribbler nor the sublimest genius of any era can escape; and which I have not attempted to escape.

I have adopted the stanza of Spenser (a measure inexpressibly beautiful), not be-

* In this sense there may be such a thing as perfectibility in works of fiction, notwithstanding the concession often made by the advocates of human improvement, that perfectibility is a term applicable only to science.

† Milton stands alone in the age which he illumined.

cause I consider it a finer model of poetical harmony than the blank verse of Shakspeare and Milton, but because in the latter there is no shelter for mediocrity: you must either succeed or fail. This perhaps an aspiring spirit should desire. But I was enticed also by the brilliancy and magnificence of sound which a mind that has been nourished upon musical thoughts can produce by a just and harmonious arrangement of the pauses of this measure. Yet there will be found some instances where I have completely failed in this attempt; and one, which I here request the reader to consider as an erratum, where there is left, most inadvertently, an alexandrine in the middle of a stanza.

But in this as in every other respect I have written fearlessly. It is the misfortune of this age that its writers, too thoughtless of immortality, are exquisitely sensible to temporary praise or blame. They write with the fear of Reviews before their eyes. This system of criticism sprang up in that torpid interval when poetry was not. Poetry, and the art which professes to regulate and limit its powers, cannot subsist together. Longinus could not have been the contemporary of Homer, nor Boileau of Horace. Yet this species of criticism never presumed to assert an understanding of its own: it has always, unlike true science, followed, not preceded, the opinion of mankind, and would even now bribe with worthless adulation some of our greatest poets to impose gratuitous fetters on their own imaginations, and become unconscious accomplices in the daily murder of all genius either not so aspiring or not so fortunate as their own. I have sought therefore to write (as I believe that Homer, Shakspeare, and Milton, wrote) in utter disregard of anonymous censure. I am certain that calumny and misrepresentation, though it may move me to compassion, cannot disturb my peace. I shall understand the expressive silence of those sagacious enemies who "dare not trust themselves to speak." I shall endeavour to extract, from the midst of insult and contempt and maledictions, those admonitions which may tend to correct whatever imperfections such censurers may discover in this my first serious appeal to the public. If certain critics were as clear-sighted as they are malignant, how great would be the benefit to be derived from their virulent writings! As it is, I fear I shall be malicious enough to be amused with their paltry tricks and lame invectives. Should the public judge that my composition is worthless, I shall indeed bow before the tribunal from which Milton received his crown of immortality: and shall seek to gather, if I live, strength from that defeat, which may nerve me to some new enterprise of thought which may *not* be worthless. I cannot conceive that Lucretius, when he meditated that poem whose doctrines are yet the basis of our metaphysical knowledge, and whose eloquence has been the wonder of mankind, wrote in awe of such censure as the hired sophists of the impure and superstitious noblemen of Rome might affix to what he should produce. It was at the period when Greece was led captive, and Asia made tributary to the Republic, fast verging itself to slavery and ruin, that a multitude of Syrian captives, bigoted to the worship of their obscene Ashtaroth, and the unworthy successors of Socrates and Zeno, found there a precarious subsistence by administering, under the name of freedmen, to the vices and vanities of the great. These wretched men were skilled to plead, with a superficial but plausible set of sophisms, in favour of that contempt for virtue which is the portion of slaves, and that faith in portents (the most fatal substitute for benevolence in the imaginations of men) which, arising from the enslaved communities of the East, then first began to overwhelm the western nations in its stream. Were these the kind of men whose disapprobation the wise and lofty-minded Lucretius should have regarded with a salutary awe? The latest and perhaps the meanest of those who follow in his footsteps would disdain to hold life on such conditions.

The poem now presented to the public occupied little more than six months in the composition. That period has been devoted to the task with unremitting ardour and enthusiasm. I have exercised a watchful and earnest criticism on my work as it

grew under my hands. I would willingly have sent it forth to the world with that perfection which long labour and revision is said to bestow. But I found that, if I should gain something in exactness by this method, I might lose much of the newness and energy of imagery and language as it flowed fresh from my mind. And, although the mere composition occupied no more than six months, the thoughts thus arranged were slowly gathered in as many years.

I trust that the reader will carefully distinguish between those opinions which have a dramatic propriety in reference to the characters which they are designed to elucidate, and such as are properly my own. The erroneous and degrading idea which men have conceived of a Supreme Being, for instance, is spoken against, but not the Supreme Being itself. The belief which some superstitious persons whom I have brought upon the stage entertain of the Deity, as injurious to the character of his benevolence, is widely different from my own. In recommending also a great and important change in the spirit which animates the social institutions of mankind, I have avoided all flattery to those violent and malignant passions of our nature which are ever on the watch to mingle with and to alloy the most beneficial innovations. There is no quarter given to revenge, or envy, or prejudice. Love is celebrated everywhere as the sole law which should govern the moral world.

1817.

DEDICATION.

There is no danger to a man that knows
What life and death is: there's not any law
Exceeds his knowledge: neither is it lawful
That he should stoop to any other law.

CHAPMAN.

TO MARY WOLLSTONECRAFT SHELLEY.

I.

So now my summer-task is ended, Mary,
And I return to thee, mine own heart's home;
As to his Queen some victor Knight of Faëry,
Earning bright spoils for her enchanted dome.
Nor thou disdain that, ere my fame become
A star among the stars of mortal night
(If it indeed may cleave its natal gloom),
Its doubtful promise thus I would unite
With thy beloved name, thou child of love and light.

II.

The toil which stole from thee so many an hour
Is ended—and the fruit is at thy feet.
No longer where the woods to frame a bower
With interlaced branches mix and meet,
Or where, with sound like many voices sweet,
Waterfalls leap among wild islands green
Which framed for my lone boat a lone retreat

Of moss-grown trees and weeds, shall I be seen :
But beside thee, where still my heart has ever been.

III.

Thoughts of great deeds were mine, dear friend, when first
The clouds which wrap this world from youth did pass.
I do remember well the hour which burst
My spirit's sleep. A fresh May-dawn it was,
When I walked forth upon the glittering grass,
And wept, I knew not why : until there rose
From the near schoolroom voices that, alas !
Were but one echo from a world of woes—
The harsh and grating strife of tyrants and of foes.

IV.

And then I clasped my hands, and looked around ;
But none was near to mock my streaming eyes,
Which poured their warm drops on the sunny ground.
So, without shame, I spake :—"I will be wise,
And just, and free, and mild, if in me lies
Such power ; for I grow weary to behold
The selfish and the strong still tyrannize
Without reproach or check." I then controlled
My tears, my heart grew calm, and I was meek and bold.

V.

And from that hour did I with earnest thought
Heap knowledge from forbidden mines of lore ;
Yet nothing that my tyrants knew or taught
I cared to learn—but from that secret store
Wrought linkèd armour for my soul, before
It might walk forth to war among mankind.
Thus power and hope were strengthened more and more
Within me ; till there came upon my mind
A sense of loneliness, a thirst with which I pined.

VI.

Alas that love should be a blight and snare
To those who seek all sympathies in one !—
Such once I sought in vain. Then black despair,
The shadow of a starless night, was thrown
Over the world in which I moved alone.
Yet never found I one not false to me,
Hard hearts and cold, like weights of icy stone
Which crushed and withered mine—that could not be
Aught but a lifeless clod, until revived by thee.

VII.

Thou friend, whose presence on my wintry heart
Fell like bright Spring upon some herbless plain,
How beautiful and calm and free thou wert
In thy young wisdom, when the mortal chain
Of Custom thou didst burst and rend in twain,
And walk (as free as light the clouds among
Which many an envious slave then breathed in vain)
From his dim dungeon; and my spirit sprung,
To meet thee, from the woes which had begirt it long!

VIII.

No more alone through the world's wilderness,
Although I trod the paths of high intent,
I journeyed now: no more companionless,
Where solitude is like despair, I went.—
There is the wisdom of a stern content
When Poverty can blight the just and good,
When Infamy dares mock the innocent,
And cherished friends turn with the multitude
To trample: this was ours, and we unshaken stood.

IX.

Now has descended a serener hour,
And, with inconstant fortune, friends return;
Though suffering leaves the knowledge and the power
Which says "Let scorn be not repaid with scorn."
And from thy side two gentle babes are born
To fill our home with smiles, and thus are we
Most fortunate beneath life's beaming morn:
And these delights, and thou, have been to me
The parents of the Song I consecrate to thee.

X.

Is it that now my inexperienced fingers
But strike the prelude of a loftier strain?
Or must the lyre on which my spirit lingers
Soon pause in silence, ne'er to sound again,
Though it might shake the Anarch Custom's reign,
And charm the minds of men to Truth's own sway,
Holier than was Amphion's? I would fain
Reply in hope—but I am worn away,
And Death and Love are yet contending for their prey.

XI.

And what art thou? I know, but dare not speak:
Time may interpret to his silent years.
Yet in the paleness of thy thoughtful cheek,
And in the light thine ample forehead wears,
And in thy sweetest smiles, and in thy tears,
And in thy gentle speech, a prophecy
Is whispered, to subdue my fondest fears:
And, through thine eyes, even in thy soul I see
A lamp of vestal fire burning internally.

XII.

They say that thou wert lovely from thy birth,
Of glorious parents thou aspiring child.
I wonder not—for One then left this earth
Whose life was like a setting planet mild,
Which clothed thee in the radiance undefiled
Of its departing glory; still her fame
Shines on thee, through the tempests dark and wild
Which shake these latter days; and thou canst claim
The shelter, from thy sire, of an immortal name.

XIII.

One voice came forth from many a mighty spirit,
Which was the echo of three thousand years;
And the tumultuous world stood mute to hear it,
As some lone man who in a desert hears
The music of his home:—unwonted fears
Fell on the pale oppressors of our race,
And Faith and Custom and low-thoughted cares,
Like thunder-stricken dragons, for a space
Left the torn human heart, their food and dwelling-place.

XIV.

Truth's deathless voice pauses among mankind!
If there must be no response to my cry—
If men must rise and stamp, with fury blind,
On his pure name who loves them,—thou and I,
Sweet friend, can look from our tranquillity
Like lamps into the world's tempestuous night,—
Two tranquil stars, while clouds are passing by
Which wrap them from the foundering seaman's sight,
That burn from year to year with unextinguished light.

CANTO I.

I.

WHEN the last hope of trampled France had failed
Like a brief dream of unremaining glory,
From visions of despair I rose, and scaled
The peak of an aërial promontory,
Whose caverned base with the vexed surge was hoary;
And saw the golden dawn break forth, and waken
Each cloud and every wave:—but transitory
The calm: for sudden the firm earth was shaken,
As if by the last wreck its frame were overtaken.

II.

So, as I stood, one blast of muttering thunder
Burst in far peals along the waveless deep,
When, gathering fast, around, above, and under,
Long trains of tremulous mist began to creep,
Until their complicating lines did steep
The orient sun in shadow:—not a sound
Was heard; one horrible repose did keep
The forests and the floods, and all around
Darkness more dread than night was poured upon the ground.

III.

Hark! 'tis the rushing of a wind that sweeps
Earth and the ocean. See! the lightnings yawn
Deluging heaven with fire, and the lashed deeps
Glitter and boil beneath! It rages on,
One mighty stream, whirlwind and waves upthrown,
Lightning, and hail, and darkness eddying by!
There is a pause—the sea-birds, that were gone
Into their caves to shriek, come forth to spy
What calm has fallen on earth, what light is in the sky.

IV.

For, where the irresistible storm had cloven
That fearful darkness, the blue sky was seen
Fretted with many a fair cloud interwoven
Most delicately; and the ocean green,
Beneath that opening spot of blue serene,
Quivered like burning emerald. Calm was spread
On all below; but far on high, between
Earth and the upper air, the vast clouds fled,
Countless and swift as leaves on autumn's tempest shed.

V.

For ever, as the war became more fierce
Between the whirlwinds and the rack on high,
That spot grew more serene; blue light did pierce
The woof of those white clouds, which seemed to lie
Far, deep, and motionless; while through the sky
The pallid semicircle of the moon
Passed on, in slow and moving majesty;
Its upper horn arrayed in mists, which soon
But slowly fled, like dew beneath the beams of noon.

VI.

I could not choose but gaze; a fascination
Dwelt in that moon and sky and clouds, which drew
My fancy thither, and (in expectation
Of what, I knew not) I remained. The hue
Of the white moon, amid that heaven so blue,
Suddenly stained with shadow did appear;
A speck, a cloud, a shape, approaching grew,
Like a great ship in the sun's sinking sphere
Beheld afar at sea, and swift it came anear.

VII.

Even like a bark, which from a chasm of mountains,
Dark, vast, and overhanging, on a river
Which there collects the strength of all its fountains
Comes forth, whilst with the speed its frame doth quiver,
Sails, oars, and stream, tending to one endeavour;
So, from that chasm of light a winged form,
On all the winds of heaven approaching ever,
Floated, dilating as it came: the storm
Pursued it with fierce blasts, and lightnings swift and warm.

VIII.

A course precipitous, of dizzy speed,
Suspending thought and breath; a monstrous sight!
For in the air do I behold indeed
An Eagle and a Serpent wreathed in fight:—
And now, relaxing its impetuous flight
Before the aërial rock on which I stood,
The Eagle, hovering, wheeled to left and right,
And hung with lingering wings over the flood,
And startled with its yells the wide air's solitude.

IX.

A shaft of light upon its wings descended,
And every golden feather gleamed therein—
Feather and scale inextricably blended.
The Serpent's mailed and many-coloured skin
Shone through the plumes; its coils were twined within
By many a swoln and knotted fold; and high
And far the neck, receding lithe and thin,
Sustained a crested head, which warily
Shifted and glanced before the Eagle's steadfast eye.

X.

Around, around, in ceaseless circles wheeling
With clang of wings and scream, the Eagle sailed
Incessantly—sometimes on high concealing
Its lessening orbs, sometimes, as if it failed,
Drooped through the air; and still it shrieked and wailed,
And, casting back its eager head, with beak
And talon unremittingly assailed
The wreathèd Serpent, who did ever seek
Upon his enemy's heart a mortal wound to wreak.

XI.

What life, what power, was kindled and arose
Within the sphere of that appalling fray!
For, from the encounter of those wondrous foes,
A vapour like the sea's suspended spray
Hung gathered: in the void air, far away,
Floated the shattered plumes; bright scales did leap,
Where'er the Eagle's talons made their way,
Like sparks into the darkness;—as they sweep,
Blood stains the snowy foam of the tumultuous deep.

XII.

Swift chances in that combat—many a check,
And many a change, a dark and wild turmoil!
Sometimes the Snake around his enemy's neck
Locked in stiff rings his adamantine coil;
Until the Eagle, faint with pain and toil,
Remitted his strong flight, and near the sea
Languidly fluttered, hopeless so to foil
His adversary,—who then reared on high
His red and burning crest, radiant with victory.

XIII.

Then on the white edge of the bursting surge,
Where they had sunk together, would the Snake
Relax his suffocating grasp, and scourge
The wind with his wild writhings; for, to break
That chain of torment, the vast bird would shake
The strength of his unconquerable wings,
As in despair, and with his sinewy neck
Dissolved in sudden shock those linkèd rings,—
Then soar, as swift as smoke from a volcano springs.

XIV.

Wile baffled wile, and strength encountered strength,
Thus long, but unprevailing. The event
Of that portentous fight appeared at length.
Until the lamp of day was almost spent
It had endured; when, lifeless, stark, and rent,
Hung high that mighty Serpent, and at last
Fell to the sea,—while o'er the continent,
With clang of wings and scream, the Eagle passed,
Heavily borne away on the exhausted blast.

XV.

And with it fled the tempest, so that ocean
And earth and sky shone through the atmosphere.
Only, 'twas strange to see the red commotion
Of waves like mountains o'er the sinking sphere
Of sunset sweep, and their fierce roar to hear
Amid the calm. Down the steep path I wound
To the sea-shore—the evening was most clear
And beautiful; and there the sea I found
Calm as a cradled child in dreamless slumber bound.

XVI.

There was a woman, beautiful as morning,
Sitting beneath the rocks upon the sand
Of the waste sea—fair as one flower adorning
An icy wilderness. Each delicate hand
Lay crossed upon her bosom, and the band
Of her dark hair had fallen, and so she sate,
Looking upon the waves. On the bare strand
Upon the sea-mark a small boat did wait,
Fair as herself, like Love by Hope left desolate.

XVII.

It seemed that this fair shape had looked upon
That unimaginable fight, and now
That her sweet eyes were weary of the sun,
As brightly it illustrated her woe;
For in the tears, which silently to flow
Paused not, its lustre hung. She, watching aye
The foam-wreaths which the faint tide wove below
Upon the spangled sands, groaned heavily,
And after every groan looked up over the sea.

XVIII.

And, when she saw the wounded Serpent make
His path between the waves, her lips grew pale,
Parted, and quivered; the tears ceased to break
From her immovable eyes; no voice of wail
Escaped her; but she rose, and, on the gale
Loosening her star-bright robe and shadowy hair,
Poured forth her voice; the caverns of the vale
That opened to the ocean caught it there,
And filled with silver sounds the overflowing air.

XIX.

She spake in language whose strange melody
Might not belong to earth. I heard alone—
What made its music more melodious be—
The pity and the love of every tone;
But to the Snake those accents sweet were known,
His native tongue and hers: nor did he beat
The hoar spray idly then, but, winding on
Through the green shadows of the waves that meet
Near to the shore, did pause beside her snowy feet.

XX.

Then on the sands the woman sate again,
And wept and clasped her hands, and, all between,
Renewed the unintelligible strain
Of her melodious voice and eloquent mien;
And she unveiled her bosom, and the green
And glancing shadows of the sea did play
O'er its marmoreal depth—one moment seen:
For ere the next the Serpent did obey
Her voice, and, coiled in rest, in her embrace it lay.

XXI.

Then she arose, and smiled on me with eyes
Serene yet sorrowing, like that planet fair,
While yet the daylight lingereth in the skies,
Which cleaves with arrowy beams the dark-red air,—
And said: "To grieve is wise, but the despair
Was weak and vain which led thee here from sleep.
This shalt thou know, and more, if thou dost dare,
With me and with this Serpent, o'er the deep
(A voyage divine and strange), companionship to keep."

XXII.

Her voice was like the wildest saddest tone,
Yet sweet, of some loved voice heard long ago.
I wept. "Shall this fair woman all alone
Over the sea with that fierce Serpent go?
His head is on her heart, and who can know
How soon he may devour his feeble prey?"
Such were my thoughts, when the tide 'gan to flow;
And that strange boat like the moon's shade did sway
Amid reflected stars that in the waters lay:—

XXIII.

A boat of rare device, which had no sail
But its own curvèd prow of thin moonstone,
Wrought like a web of texture fine and frail,
To catch those gentlest winds which are not known
To breathe, but by the steady speed alone
With which it cleaves the sparkling sea. And now
We are embarked. The mountains hang and frown
Over the starry deep that gleams below,
A vast and dim expanse, as o'er the waves we go.

XXIV.

And, as we sailed, a strange and awful tale
That woman told, like such mysterious dream
As makes the slumberer's cheek with wonder pale.
'Twas midnight, and around, a shoreless stream,
Wide ocean rolled, when that majestic theme
Shrined in her heart found utterance, and she bent
Her looks on mine; those eyes a kindling beam
Of love divine into my spirit sent,
And, ere her lips could move, made the air eloquent.

XXV.

"Speak not to me, but hear! Much shalt thou learn,
Much must remain unthought, and more untold,
In the dark future's ever-flowing urn.
Know then that from the depth of ages old
Two Powers o'er mortal things dominion hold,
Ruling the world with a divided lot,—
Immortal, all-pervading, manifold,
Twin Genii, equal Gods—when life and thought
Sprang forth, they burst the womb of inessential nought.

XXVI.

"The earliest dweller of the world, alone,
Stood on the verge of chaos. Lo! afar
O'er the wide wild abyss two meteors shone,
Sprung from the depth of its tempestuous jar:
A blood-red Comet and the Morning Star
Mingling their beams in combat. As he stood,
All thoughts within his mind waged mutual war
In dreadful sympathy:—when to the flood
That fair Star fell, he turned and shed his brother's blood.

XXVII.

"Thus Evil triumphed, and the Spirit of Evil,
One Power of many shapes which none may know,
One Shape of many names; the Fiend did revel
In victory, reigning o'er a world of woe,—
For the new race of man went to and fro,
Famished and homeless, loathed and loathing, wild,
And hating good; for his immortal foe
He changed from starry shape, beauteous and mild,
To a dire Snake, with man and beast unreconciled.

XXVIII.

"The darkness lingering o'er the dawn of things
Was Evil's breath and life; this made him strong
To soar aloft with overshadowing wings:
And the great Spirit of Good did creep among
The nations of mankind, and every tongue
Cursed and blasphemed him as he passed; for none
Knew good from evil, though their names were hung
In mockery o'er the fane where many a groan
As King and Lord and God the conquering Fiend did own,—

XXIX.

"The Fiend, whose name was legion; Death, Decay,
Earthquake, and Blight, and Want, and Madness pale,
Winged and wan Diseases, an array
Numerous as leaves that strew the autumnal gale;
Poison, a snake in flowers, beneath the veil
Of food and mirth hiding his mortal head;
And, without whom all these might nought avail,
Fear, Hatred, Faith, and Tyranny, who spread
Those subtle nets which snare the living and the dead.

XXX.

"His spirit is their power, and they his slaves
In air, in light, and thought, and language, dwell;
And keep their state from palaces to graves,
In all resorts of men; invisible,
But when, in ebon mirror, Nightmare fell,
To tyrant or impostor bids them rise
Black winged demon forms—whom, from the hell
His reign and dwelling beneath nether skies,
He loosens to their dark and blasting ministries.

XXXI.

"In the world's youth his empire was as firm
As its foundations. Soon the Spirit of Good,
Though in the likeness of a loathsome worm,
Sprang from the billows of the formless flood,
Which shrank and fled,—and with that Fiend of blood
Renewed the doubtful war. Thrones then first shook;
And earth's immense and trampled multitude
In hope on their own powers began to look;
And Fear, the demon pale, his sanguine shrine forsook.

XXXII.

"Then Greece arose, and to its bards and sages,
In dream, the golden-pinioned Genii came,
Even where they slept amid the night of ages,
Steeping their hearts in the divinest flame
Which thy breath kindled, Power of holiest name!
And oft in cycles since, when darkness gave
New weapons to thy foe, their sunlike fame
Upon the combat shone—a light to save,
Like paradise spread forth beyond the shadowy grave.

XXXIII.

"Such is this conflict. When mankind doth strive
With its oppressors in a strife of blood;
Or when free thoughts, like lightnings, are alive,
And in each bosom of the multitude
Justice and truth with custom's hydra brood
Wage silent war; when priests and kings dissemble
In smiles or frowns their fierce disquietude;
When round pure hearts a host of hopes assemble;
The Snake and Eagle meet—the world's foundations tremble!

XXXIV.

"Thou hast beheld that fight. When to thy home
Thou dost return, steep not its hearth in tears;
Though thou mayst hear that earth is now become
The tyrant's garbage, which to his compeers,
The vile reward of their dishonoured years,
He will dividing give.—The victor Fiend,
Omnipotent of yore, now quails, and fears
His triumph dearly won, which soon will lend
An impulse swift and sure to his approaching end.

XXXV.

"List, stranger, list! Mine is a human form,
Like that thou wearest—touch me—shrink not now!
My hand thou feel'st is not a ghost's, but warm
With human blood.—'Twas many years ago
Since first my thirsting soul aspired to know
The secrets of this wondrous world, when deep
My heart was pierced with sympathy for woe
Which could not be mine own—and thought did keep,
In dream, unnatural watch beside an infant's sleep.

XXXVI.

"Woe could not be mine own, since far from men
I dwelt, a free and happy orphan child,
By the sea-shore, in a deep mountain glen;
And near the waves and through the forests wild
I roamed, to storm and darkness reconciled,
For I was calm while tempest shook the sky:
But, when the breathless heavens in beauty smiled,
I wept sweet tears, yet too tumultuously
For peace, and clasped my hands aloft in ecstasy.

XXXVII.

"These were forebodings of my fate.—Before
A woman's heart beat in my virgin breast,
It had been nurtured in divinest lore:
A dying poet gave me books, and blessed
With wild but holy talk the sweet unrest
In which I watched him as he died away—
A youth with hoary hair—a fleeting guest
Of our lone mountains: and this lore did sway
My spirit like a storm, contending there alway.

XXXVIII.

"Thus the dark tale which history doth unfold
I knew, but not, methinks, as others know,
For they weep not; and Wisdom had unrolled
The clouds which hide the gulf of mortal woe,—
(To few can she that warning vision show)—
For I loved all things with intense devotion;
So that, when hope's deep source in fullest flow,
Like earthquake, did uplift the stagnant ocean
Of human thoughts, mine shook beneath the wide emotion.

XXXIX.

"When first the living blood through all these veins
Kindled a thought in sense, great France sprang forth,
And seized, as if to break, the ponderous chains
Which bind in woe the nations of the earth.
I saw, and started from my cottage hearth;
And to the clouds and waves in tameless gladness
Shrieked, till they caught immeasurable mirth,
And laughed in light and music: soon sweet madness
Was poured upon my heart, a soft and thrilling sadness.

XL.

"Deep slumber fell on me;—my dreams were fire,
Soft and delightful thoughts did rest and hover
Like shadows o'er my brain; and strange desire,
The tempest of a passion raging over
My tranquil soul, its depths with light did cover,—
Which passed; and calm and darkness, sweeter far,
Came—then I loved; but not a human lover!
For, when I rose from sleep, the Morning Star [were.
Shone through the woodbine wreaths which round my casement

XLI.

"Twas like an eye which seemed to smile on me.
I watched till, by the sun made pale, it sank
Under the billows of the heaving sea;
But from its beams deep love my spirit drank,
And to my brain the boundless world now shrank
Into one thought—one image—yea, for ever!
Even like the day's-spring poured on vapours dank,
The beams of that one Star did shoot and quiver
Through my benighted mind—and were extinguished never.

XLII.

"The day passed thus. At night, methought in dream
A shape of speechless beauty did appear;
It stood like light on a careering stream
Of golden clouds which shook the atmosphere;—
A winged youth. His radiant brow did wear
The Morning Star: a wild dissolving bliss
Over my frame he breathed, approaching near,
And bent his eyes of kindling tenderness
Near mine, and on my lips impressed a lingering kiss,—

XLIII.

"And said: 'A Spirit loves thee, mortal maiden:
How wilt thou prove thy worth?' Then joy and sleep
Together fled; my soul was deeply laden,
And to the shore I went to muse and weep.
But, as I moved, over my heart did creep
A joy less soft but more profound and strong
Than my sweet dream, and it forbade to keep
The path of the sea-shore: that Spirit's tongue
Seemed whispering in my heart, and bore my steps along.

XLIV.

"How, to that vast and peopled city led
Which was a field of holy warfare then,
I walked among the dying and the dead,
And shared in fearless deeds with evil men,
Calm as an angel in the dragon's den—
How I braved death for liberty and truth,
And spurned at peace and power and fame—and, when
Those hopes had lost the glory of their youth,
How sadly I returned—might move the hearer's ruth.

XLV.

"Warm tears throng fast! the tale may not be said.
Know then that, when this grief had been subdued,
I was not left, like others, cold and dead.
The Spirit whom I loved in solitude
Sustained his child: the tempest-shaken wood,
The waves, the fountains, and the hush of night,
These were his voice; and well I understood
His smile divine when the calm sea was bright
With silent stars, and heaven was breathless with delight.

XLVI.

"In lonely glens, amid the roar of rivers,
When the dim nights were moonless, have I known
Joys which no tongue can tell; my pale lip quivers
When thought revisits them:—know thou alone
That, after many wondrous years were flown,
I was awakened by a shriek of woe;
And over me a mystic robe was thrown
By viewless hands, and a bright star did glow
Before my steps—the Snake then met his mortal foe."

XLVII.

"Thou fear'st not then the Serpent on thy heart?"
"Fear it!" she said with brief and passionate cry,—
And spake no more. That silence made me start.
I looked, and we were sailing pleasantly,
Swift as a cloud between the sea and sky,
Beneath the rising moon seen far away;
Mountains of ice, like sapphire, piled on high,
Hemming the horizon round, in silence lay
On the still waters,—these we did approach alway.

XLVIII.

And swift and swifter grew the vessel's motion,
So that a dizzy trance fell on my brain.
Wild music woke me: we had past the ocean
Which girds the pole, nature's remotest reign—
And we glode fast o'er a pellucid plain
Of waters, azure with the noontide day.
Etherial mountains shone around—a fane
Stood in the midst, girt by green isles which lay
On the blue sunny deep, resplendent far away.

XLIX.

It was a temple such as mortal hand
Has never built, nor ecstasy or dream
Reared in the cities of enchanted land.
'Twas likest heaven ere yet day's purple stream
Ebbs o'er the western forest, while the gleam
Of the unrisen moon among the clouds
Is gathering—when with many a golden beam
The thronging constellations rush in crowds,
Paving with fire the sky and the marmoreal floods :

L.

Like what may be conceived of this vast dome
When from the depths which thought can seldom pierce
Genius beholds it rise (his native home,
Girt by the deserts of the Universe),
Yet nor in painting's light, nor mightier verse,
Nor sculpture's marble language, can invest
That shape to mortal sense—such glooms immerse
That incommunicable sight, and rest
Upon the labouring brain and overburthened breast.

LI.

Winding among the lawny islands fair,
Whose blosmy forests starred the shadowy deep,
The wingless boat paused where an ivory stair
Its fretwork in the crystal sea did steep,
Encircling that vast fane's aërial heap.
We disembarked, and through a portal wide
We passed—whose roof, of moonstone carved, did keep
A glimmering o'er the forms on every side,
Sculptures like life and thought, immovable, deep-eyed.

LII.

We came to a vast hall whose glorious roof
Was diamond, which had drunk the lightning's sheen
In darkness, and now poured it through the woof
Of spell-inwoven clouds hung there to screen
Its blinding splendour. Through such veil was seen
That work of subtlest power, divine and rare ;
Orb above orb, with starry shapes between,
And hornèd moons, and meteors strange and fair ;
On night-black columns poised—one hollow hemisphere :

LIII.

Ten thousand columns in that quivering light
Distinct—between whose shafts wound far away
The long and labyrinthine aisles, more bright
With their own radiance than the heaven of day.
And on the jasper walls around there lay
Paintings, the poesy of mightiest thought,
Which did the Spirit's history display;
A tale of passionate change, divinely taught,
Which in their wingèd dance unconscious Genii wrought.

LIV.

Beneath there sate on many a sapphire throne
The great who had departed from mankind,
A mighty senate; some, whose white hair shone
Like mountain snow, mild, beautiful, and blind;
Some, female forms, whose gestures beamed with mind;
And ardent youths, and children bright and fair;
And some had lyres whose strings were intertwined
With pale and clinging flames, which ever there
Waked faint yet thrilling sounds that pierced the crystal air.

LV.

One seat was vacant in the midst, a throne
Reared on a pyramid like sculptured flame,
Distinct with circling steps which rested on
Their own deep fire. Soon as the woman came
Into that hall, she shrieked the Spirit's name,
And fell, and vanished slowly from the sight.
Darkness arose from her dissolving frame,—
Which, gathering, filled that dome of woven light,
Blotting its spherèd stars with supernatural night.

LVI.

Then first two glittering lights were seen to glide
In circles on the amethystine floor,
Small serpent eyes trailing from side to side,
Like meteors on a river's grassy shore.
They round each other rolled, dilating more
And more—then rose, commingling into one,
One clear and mighty planet hanging o'er
A cloud of deepest shadow which was thrown
Athwart the glowing steps and the crystalline throne.

LVII.

The cloud which rested on that cone of flame
Was cloven: beneath the planet sate a form
Fairer than tongue can speak or thought may frame,
The radiance of whose limbs rose-like and warm
Flowed forth, and did with softest light inform
The shadowy dome, the sculptures, and the state
Of those assembled shapes—with clinging charm
Sinking upon their hearts and mine. He sate
Majestic yet most mild—calm yet compassionate.

LVIII.

Wonder and joy a passing faintness threw
Over my brow. A hand supported me,
Whose touch was magic strength: an eye of blue
Looked into mine, like moonlight, soothingly;
And a voice said:—"Thou must a listener be
This day. Two mighty spirits now return,
Like birds of calm, from the world's raging sea:
They pour fresh light from hope's immortal urn.
A tale of human power—despair not—list and learn!"

LIX.

I looked, and lo! one stood forth eloquently.
His eyes were dark and deep, and the clear brow
Which shadowed them was like the morning sky,
The cloudless heaven of Spring, when in their flow
Through the bright air the soft winds as they blow
Wake the green world: his gestures did obey
The oracular mind that made his features glow;
And, where his curvèd lips half-open lay,
Passion's divinest stream had made impetuous way.

LX.

Beneath the darkness of his outspread hair
He stood thus beautiful. But there was One
Who sate beside him like his shadow there,
And held his hand—far lovelier. She was known
To be thus fair by the few lines alone
Which through her floating locks and gathered cloak,
Glances of soul-dissolving glory, shone.
None else beheld her eyes; in him they woke
Memories which found a tongue, as thus he silence broke.

CANTO II.

I.

THE starlight smile of children, the sweet looks
Of women, the fair breast from which I fed,
The murmur of the unreposing brooks,
And the green light which, shifting overhead,
Some tangled bower of vines around me shed,
The shells on the sea-sand, and the wild flowers,
The lamplight through the rafters cheerly spread,
And on the twining flax—in life's young hours
These sights and sounds did nurse my spirit's folded powers.

II.

In Argolis beside the echoing sea,
Such impulses within my mortal frame
Arose, and they were dear to memory,
Like tokens of the dead:—but others came
Soon, in another shape: the wondrous fame
Of the past world, the vital words and deeds
Of minds whom neither time nor change can tame,
Traditions dark and old whence evil creeds
Start forth, and whose dim shade a stream of poison feeds.

III.

I heard, as all have heard, the various story
Of human life, and wept unwilling tears.
Feeble historians of its shame and glory,
False disputants on all its hopes and fears,
Victims who worshiped ruin, chroniclers
Of daily scorn, and slaves who loathed their state,
Yet, flattering Power, had given its ministers
A throne of judgment in the grave—'twas fate
That among such as these my youth should seek its mate.

IV.

The land in which I lived by a fell bane
Was withered up. Tyrants dwelt side by side,
And stabled in our homes—until the chain
Stifled the captive's cry, and to abide
That blasting curse men had no shame. All vied
In evil, slave and despot; fear with lust
Strange fellowship through mutual hate had tied,
Like two dark serpents tangled in the dust,
Which on the paths of men their mingling poison thrust.

V.

Earth, our bright home, its mountains and its waters,
And the etherial shapes which are suspended
Over its green expanse—and those fair daughters,
The Clouds, of sun and ocean, who have blended
The colours of the air since first extended
It cradled the young World,—none wandered forth
To see or feel: a darkness had descended
On every heart. The light which shows its worth
Must among gentle thoughts and fearless take its birth.

VI.

This vital world, this home of happy spirits,
Was as a dungeon to my blasted kind.
All that despair from murdered hope inherits
They sought, and, in their helpless misery blind,
A deeper prison and heavier chains did find,
And stronger tyrants:—a dark gulf before,
The realm of a stern ruler, yawned; behind,
Terror and time conflicting drove, and bore
On their tempestuous flood the shrieking wretch from shore.

VII.

Out of that ocean's wrecks had Guilt and Woe
Framed a dark dwelling for their homeless thought,
And, starting at the ghosts which to and fro
Glide o'er its dim and gloomy strand, had brought
The worship thence which they each other taught.
Well might men loathe their life! well might they turn
Even to the ills again from which they sought
Such refuge after death! well might they learn
To gaze on this fair world with hopeless unconcern!

VIII.

For they all pined in bondage; body and soul,
Tyrant and slave, victim and torturer, bent
Before one Power, to which supreme control
Over their will by their own weakness lent
Made all its many names omnipotent;
All symbols of things evil, all divine;
And hymns of blood or mockery, which rent
The air from all its fanes, did intertwine
Imposture's impious toils round each discordant shrine.

IX.

I heard, as all have heard, life's various story,
And in no careless heart transcribed the tale;
But from the sneers of men who had grown hoary
In shame and scorn, from groans of crowds made pale
By famine, from a mother's desolate wail
O'er her polluted child, from innocent blood
Poured on the earth, and brows anxious and pale
With the heart's warfare, did I gather food
To feed my many thoughts—a tameless multitude.

X.

I wandered through the wrecks of days departed
Far by the desolated shore, when even
O'er the still sea and jagged islets darted
The light of moonrise; in the northern heaven,
Among the clouds near the horizon driven,
The mountains lay beneath one planet pale;
Around me broken tombs and columns riven
Looked vast in twilight, and the sorrowing gale
Waked in those ruins grey its everlasting wail.

XI.

I knew not who had framed these wonders then,
Nor had I heard the story of their deeds;
But dwellings of a race of mightier men,
And monuments of less ungentle creeds,
Tell their own tale to him who wisely heeds
The language which they speak; and now to me
The moonlight making pale the blooming weeds,
The bright stars shining in the breathless sea,
Interpreted those scrolls of mortal mystery.

XII.

Such man has been, and such may yet become!
Ay, wiser, greater, gentler, even than they
Who on the fragments of yon shattered dome
Have stamped the sign of power! I felt the sway
Of the vast stream of ages bear away
My floating thoughts—my heart beat loud and fast—
Even as a storm let loose beneath the ray
Of the still moon, my spirit onward passed,
Beneath truth's steady beams upon its tumult cast.

XIII.

"It shall be thus no more! too long, too long,
Sons of the glorious dead, have ye lain bound
In darkness and in ruin!—Hope is strong,
Justice and Truth their wingèd child have found.—
Awake! arise! until the mighty sound
Of your career shall scatter in its gust
The thrones of the oppressor, and the ground
Hide the last altar's unregarded dust,
Whose idol has so long betrayed your impious trust!

XIV.

"It must be so—I will arise and waken
The multitude, and, like a sulphurous hill
Which on a sudden from its snows has shaken
The swoon of ages, it shall burst, and fill
The world with cleansing fire; it must, it will—
It may not be restrained!—And who shall stand
Amid the rocking earthquake steadfast still,
But Laon? on high freedom's desert land
A tower whose marble walls the leaguèd storms withstand!"

XV.

One summer night, in commune with the hope
Thus deeply fed, amid those ruins grey
I watched beneath the dark sky's starry cope;
And ever, from that hour, upon me lay
The burthen of this hope,—and night or day,
In vision or in dream, clove to my breast.
Among mankind, or when gone far away
To the lone shores and mountains, 'twas a guest
Which followed where I fled, and watched when I did rest.

XVI.

These hopes found words through which my spirit sought
To weave a bondage of such sympathy
As might create some response to the thought
Which ruled me now—and as the vapours lie
Bright in the outspread morning's radiancy,
So were these thoughts invested with the light
Of language; and all bosoms made reply
On which its lustre streamed, whene'er it might
Through darkness wide and deep those trancèd spirits smite.

XVII.

Yes, many an eye with dizzy tears was dim;
And oft I thought to clasp my own heart's brother
When I could feel the listener's senses swim,
And hear his breath its own swift gaspings smother
Even as my words evoked them—and another,
And yet another, I did fondly deem,
Felt that we all were sons of one great mother;
And the cold truth such sad reverse did seem
As to awake in grief from some delightful dream.

XVIII.

Yes, oft beside the ruined labyrinth
Which skirts the hoary caves of the green deep
Did Laon and his friend on one grey plinth
Round whose worn base the wild waves hiss and leap,
Resting at eve, a lofty converse keep:
And that his friend was false may now be said
Calmly—that he, like other men, could weep
Tears which are lies, and could betray and spread
Snares for that guileless heart which for his own had bled.

XIX.

Then, had no great aim recompensed my sorrow,
I must have sought dark respite from its stress
In dreamless rest, in sleep that sees no morrow:
For to tread life's dismaying wilderness
Without one smile to cheer, one voice to bless,
Amid the snares and scoffs of humankind,
Is hard. But I betrayed it not, nor less,
With love that scorned return, sought to unbind
The interwoven clouds which make its wisdom blind.

XX.

With deathless minds, which leave where they have passed
A path of light, my soul communion knew;
Till from that glorious intercourse, at last,
As from a mine of magic store, I drew
Words which were weapons;—round my heart there grew
The adamantine armour of their power,
And from my fancy wings of golden hue
Sprang forth. Yet not alone from wisdom's tower,
A minister of truth, these plumes young Laon bore.

XXI.

An orphan with my parents lived, whose eyes
Where lodestars of delight which drew me home
When I might wander forth; nor did I prize
Aught human thing beneath heaven's mighty dome
Beyond this child. So, when sad hours were come,
And baffled hope like ice still clung to me,
Since kin were cold, and friends had now become
Heartless and false, I turned from all to be,
Cythna, the only source of tears and smiles to thee.

XXII.

What wert thou then? A child most infantine,
Yet wandering far beyond that innocent age
In all but its sweet looks and mien divine;
Even then, methought, with the world's tyrant rage
A patient warfare thy young heart did wage,
When those soft eyes of scarcely conscious thought
Some tale or thine own fancies would engage
To overflow with tears, or converse fraught
With passion o'er their depths its fleeting light had wrought.

XXIII.

She moved upon this earth a shape of brightness,
A power that from its objects scarcely drew
One impulse of her being—in her lightness
Most like some radiant cloud of morning dew
Which wanders through the waste air's pathless blue,
To nourish some far desert; she did seem,
Beside me, gathering beauty as she grew,
Like the bright shade of some immortal dream
Which walks when tempest sleeps the wave of life's dark stream.

XXIV.

As mine own shadow was this child to me,
A second self, far dearer and more fair,
Which clothed in undissolving radiancy
All those steep paths which languor and despair
Of human things had made so dark and bare,
But which I trod alone; nor, till bereft
Of friends, and overcome by lonely care,
Knew I what solace for that loss was left,
Though by a bitter wound my trusting heart was cleft.

XXV.

Once she was dear; now she was all I had
To love in human life—this playmate sweet,
This child of twelve years old. So she was made
My sole associate, and her willing feet
Wandered with mine where earth and ocean meet,
Beyond the aërial mountains whose vast cells
The unreposing billows ever beat,
Through forests wide and old, and lawny dells
Where boughs of incense droop over the emerald wells.

XXVI.

And warm and light I felt her clasping hand
When twined in mine: she followed where I went,
Through the lone paths of our immortal land.
It had no waste but some memorial lent
Which strung me to my toil—some monument
Vital with mind: then Cythna by my side,
Until the bright and beaming day were spent,
Would rest, with looks entreating to abide,
Too earnest and too sweet ever to be denied.

XXVII.

And soon I could not have refused her. Thus,
For ever, day and night, we two were ne'er
Parted, but when brief sleep divided us:
And, when the pauses of the lulling air
Of noon beside the sea had made a lair
For her soothed senses, in my arms she slept;
And I kept watch over her slumbers there,
While, as the shifting visions o'er her swept,
Amid her innocent rest by turns she smiled and wept:—

XXVIII.

And in the murmur of her dreams was heard
Sometimes the name of Laon. Suddenly
She would arise, and, like the secret bird
Whom sunset wakens, fill the shore and sky
With her sweet accents—a wild melody—
Hymns which my soul had woven to freedom. Strong
The source of passion whence they rose, to be
Triumphant strains which, like a spirit's tongue,
To the enchanted waves that child of glory sung—

XXIX.

Her white arms lifted through the shadowy stream
Of her loose hair. Oh excellently great
Seemed to me then my purpose, the vast theme
Of those impassioned songs! when Cythna sate
Amid the calm which rapture doth create
After its tumult; her heart vibrating,
Her spirit o'er the ocean's floating state
From her deep eyes far wandering, on the wing
Of visions that were mine, beyond its utmost spring.

XXX.

For, before Cythna loved it, had my song
Peopled with thoughts the boundless universe,
A mighty congregation, which were strong,
Where'er they trod the darkness, to disperse
The cloud of that unutterable curse
Which clings upon mankind :—all things became
Slaves to my holy and heroic verse,
Earth, sea, and sky, the planets, life, and fame,
And fate, or whate'er else binds the world's wondrous frame.

XXXI.

And this beloved child thus felt the sway
Of my conceptions gathering,—like a cloud,
The very wind on which it rolls away.
Hers too were all my thoughts ere yet, endowed
With music and with light, their fountains flowed
In poesy; and her still and earnest face,
Pallid with feelings which intensely glowed
Within, was turned on mine with speechless grace,
Watching the hopes which there her heart had learned to trace.

XXXII.

In me communion with this purest being
Kindled intenser zeal, and made me wise
In knowledge, which in hers mine own mind seeing
Left in the human world few mysteries.
How without fear of evil or disguise
Was Cythna!—what a spirit strong and mild,
Which death or pain or peril could despise,
Yet melt in tenderness! what genius wild
Yet mighty was enclosed within one simple child!

XXXIII.

New lore was this: Old age, with its grey hair,
And wrinkled legends of unworthy things,
And icy sneers, is nought. It cannot dare
To burst the chains which life for ever flings
On the entangled soul's aspiring wings;
So is it cold and cruel, and is made
The careless slave of that dark Power which brings
Evil, like blight, on man, who, still betrayed,
Laughs o'er the grave in which his living hopes are laid.

XXXIV.

Nor are the strong and the severe to keep
The empire of the world. Thus Cythna taught
Even in the visions of her eloquent sleep,
Unconscious of the power through which she wrought
The woof of such intelligible thought;
As, from the tranquil strength which cradled lay
In her smile-peopled rest, my spirit sought
Why the deceiver and the slave has sway
O'er heralds so divine of truth's arising day.

XXXV.

Within that fairest form the female mind,
Untainted by the poison clouds which rest
On the dark world, a sacred home did find:
But else, from the wide earth's maternal breast,
Victorious Evil, which had dispossessed
All native power, had those fair children torn,
And made them slaves to soothe his vile unrest,
And minister to lust its joys forlorn,
Till they had learned to breathe the atmosphere of scorn.

XXXVI.

This misery was but coldly felt, till she
Became my only friend, who had endued
My purpose with a wider sympathy.
Thus, Cythna mourned with me the servitude
In which the half of humankind were mewed,
Victims of lust and hate, the slaves of slaves:
She mourned that grace and power were thrown as food
To the hyæna Lust, who among graves,
Over his loathèd meal, laughing in agony, raves.

XXXVII.

And I, still gazing on that glorious child,
Even as these thoughts flushed o'er her :—"Cythna sweet,
Well with the world art thou unreconciled ;
Never will peace and human nature meet,
Till free and equal man and woman greet
Domestic peace ; and, ere this power can make
In human hearts its calm and holy seat,
This slavery must be broken." As I spake,
From Cythna's eyes a light of exultation brake.

XXXVIII.

She replied earnestly :—"It shall be mine,
This task,—mine, Laon !—Thou hast much to gain ;
Nor wilt thou at poor Cythna's pride repine,
If she should lead a happy female train
To meet thee over the rejoicing plain,
When myriads at thy call shall throng around
The Golden City."—Then the child did strain
My arm upon her tremulous heart, and wound
Her own about my neck, till some reply she found.

XXXIX.

I smiled, and spake not.—"Wherefore dost thou smile
At what I say? Laon, I am not weak ;
And, though my cheek might become pale the while,
With thee, if thou desirest, will I seek,
Through their array of banded slaves, to wreak
Ruin upon the tyrants. I had thought
It was more hard to turn my unpractised cheek
To scorn and shame ; and this beloved spot,
And thee, O dearest friend, to leave and murmur not.

XL.

"Whence came I what I am? Thou, Laon, knowest
How a young child should thus undaunted be ;
Methinks it is a power which thou bestowest,
Through which I seek, by most resembling thee,
So to become most good and great and free ;
Yet, far beyond this ocean's utmost roar,
In towers and huts are many like to me,
Who, could they see thine eyes, or feel such lore
As I have learnt from them, like me would fear no more.

XLI.

"Think'st thou that I shall speak unskilfully,
And none will heed me? I remember now
How once a slave in tortures doomed to die
Was saved because in accents sweet and low
He sang a song his judge loved long ago,
As he was led to death.—All shall relent
Who hear me—tears, as mine have flowed, shall flow,
Hearts beat as mine now beats, with such intent
As renovates the world; a will omnipotent!

XLII.

"Yes, I will tread pride's golden palaces,
Through penury's roofless huts and squalid cells
Will I descend, where'er in abjectness
Woman with some vile slave her tyrant dwells;
There with the music of thine own sweet spells
Will disenchant the captives, and will pour
For the despairing, from the crystal wells
Of thy deep spirit, reason's mighty lore,—
And power shall then abound, and hope arise once more.

XLIII.

"Can man be free if woman be a slave?
Chain one who lives, and breathes this boundless air,
To the corruption of a closèd grave!
Can they whose mates are beasts condemned to bear
Scorn heavier far than toil or anguish dare
To trample their oppressors? In their home,
Among their babes, thou know'st a curse would wear
The shape of woman—hoary Crime would come
Behind, and Fraud rebuild Religion's tottering dome.

XLIV.

"I am a child:—I would not yet depart.
When I go forth alone, bearing the lamp
Aloft which thou hast kindled in my heart,
Millions of slaves from many a dungeon damp
Shall leap in joy, as the benumbing cramp
Of ages leaves their limbs. No ill may harm
Thy Cythna ever: truth its radiant stamp
Has fixed, as an invulnerable charm,
Upon her children's brow, dark falsehood to disarm.

XLV.

"Wait yet awhile for the appointed day.
Thou wilt depart, and I with tears shall stand
Watching thy dim sail skirt the ocean grey;
Amid the dwellers of this lonely land
I shall remain alone—and thy command
Shall then dissolve the world's unquiet trance,
And, multitudinous as the desert sand
Borne on the storm, its millions shall advance,
Thronging round thee, the light of their deliverance.

XLVI.

"Then (like the forests of some pathless mountain
Which from remotest glens two warring winds
Involve in fire, which not the loosened fountain
Of broadest floods might quench) shall all the kinds
Of evil catch from our uniting minds
The spark which must consume them;—Cythna then
Will have cast off the impotence that binds
Her childhood now, and through the paths of men
Will pass, as the charmed bird that haunts the serpent's den.

XLVII.

"We part!—O Laon, I must dare, nor tremble,
To meet those looks no more!—Oh heavy stroke!
Sweet brother of my soul, can I dissemble
The agony of this thought?"—As thus she spoke
The gathered sobs her quivering accents broke,
And in my arms she hid her beating breast.
I remained still for tears. Sudden she woke
As one awakes from sleep, and wildly pressed
My bosom, her whole frame impetuously possessed.

XLVIII.

"We part to meet again. But yon blue waste,
Yon desert wide and deep, holds no recess
Within whose happy silence, thus embraced,
We might survive all ills in one caress:
Nor doth the grave—I fear 'tis passionless—
Nor yon cold vacant heaven:—we meet again
Within the minds of men, whose lips shall bless

Our memory, and whose hopes its light retain,
When these dissevered bones are trodden in the plain."

XLIX.

I could not speak, though she had ceased; for now
The fountains of her feeling, swift and deep,
Seemed to suspend the tumult of their flow.
So we arose, and by the starlight steep
Went homeward—neither did we speak nor weep,
But, pale, were calm.—With passion thus subdued,
Like evening shades that o'er the mountains creep,
We moved towards our home; where, in this mood,
Each from the other sought refuge in solitude.

CANTO III.

I.

WHAT thoughts had sway o'er Cythna's lonely slumber
That night I know not; but my own did seem
As if they might ten thousand years outnumber
Of waking life, the visions of a dream
Which hid in one dim gulf the troubled stream
Of mind; a boundless chaos wild and vast,
Whose limits yet were never memory's theme:
And I lay struggling as its whirlwinds passed,
Sometimes for rapture sick, sometimes for pain aghast.

II.

Two hours, whose mighty circle did embrace
More time than might make grey the infant world,
Rolled thus, a weary and tumultuous space.
When the third came, like mist on breezes curled,
From my dim sleep a shadow was unfurled.
Methought, upon the threshold of a cave
I sate with Cythna; drooping briony, pearled
With dew from the wild streamlet's shattered wave,
Hung, where we sate to taste the joys which nature gave.

III.

We lived a day as we were wont to live;
But nature had a robe of glory on,
And the bright air o'er every shape did weave
Intenser hues, so that the herbless stone,
The leafless bough among the leaves alone,
Had being clearer than its own could be,—
And Cythna's pure and radiant self was shown,
In this strange vision, so divine to me
That, if I loved before, now love was agony.

IV.

Morn fled, noon came, evening, then night, descended,
And we prolonged calm talk beneath the sphere
Of the calm moon—when suddenly was blended
With our repose a nameless sense of fear;
And from the cave behind I seemed to hear
Sounds gathering upwards—accents incomplete
And stifled shrieks,—and now, more near and near,
A tumult and a rush of thronging feet
The cavern's secret depths beneath the earth did beat.

V.

The scene was changed, and away, away, away,
Thorough the air and over the sea we sped,
And Cythna in my sheltering bosom lay,
And the winds bore me;—through the darkness spread
Around, the gaping earth then vomited
Legions of foul and ghastly shapes, which hung
Upon my flight, and ever, as we fled,
They plucked at Cythna. Soon to me then clung
A sense of actual things those monstrous dreams among.

VI.

And I lay struggling in the impotence
Of sleep, while outward life had burst its bound,—
Though, still deluded, strove the tortured sense
To its dire wanderings to adapt the sound
Which in the light of morn was poured around
Our dwelling. Breathless, pale, and unaware,
I rose; and all the cottage crowded found
With armèd men, whose glittering swords were bare,
And whose degraded limbs the tyrant's garb did wear.

VII.

And, ere with rapid lips and gathered brow
I could demand the cause, a feeble shriek—
It was a feeble shriek, faint, far, and low—
Arrested me. My mien grew calm and meek,
And, grasping a small knife, I went to seek
That voice among the crowd—'twas Cythna's cry!
Beneath most calm resolve did agony wreak
Its whirlwind rage:—so I passed quietly,
Till I beheld where bound that dearest child did lie.

VIII.

I started to behold her, for delight
And exultation, and a joyance free,
Solemn, serene, and lofty, filled the light
Of the calm smile with which she looked on me:
So that I feared some brainless ecstasy,
Wrought from that bitter woe, had wildered her.
"Farewell! farewell!" she said, as I drew nigh.
"At first my peace was marred by this strange stir:
Now I am calm as truth—its chosen minister.

IX.

"Look not so, Laon—say farewell in hope:
These bloody men are but the slaves who bear
Their mistress to her task. It was my scope
The slavery where they drag me now to share,
And among captives willing chains to wear
Awhile—the rest thou know'st. Return, dear friend!
Let our first triumph trample the despair
Which would ensnare us now; for, in the end,
In victory or in death our hopes and fears must blend."

X.

These words had fallen on my unheeding ear,
Whilst I had watched the motions of the crew
With seeming careless glance; not many were
Around her, for their comrades just withdrew
To guard some other victim—so I drew
My knife, and with one impulse, suddenly,
All unaware three of their number slew,
And grasped a fourth by the throat, and with loud cry
My countrymen invoked to death or liberty.

XI.

What followed then I know not—for a stroke
On my raised arm and naked head came down,
Filling my eyes with blood.—When I awoke,
I felt that they had bound me in my swoon,
And up a rock which overhangs the town,
By the steep path, were bearing me: below
The plain was filled with slaughter,—overthrown
The vineyards and the harvests, and the glow
Of blazing roofs shone far o'er the white ocean's flow.

XII.

Upon that rock a mighty column stood
Whose capital seemed sculptured in the sky,
Which to the wanderers o'er the solitude
Of distant seas, from ages long gone by,
Had made a landmark; o'er its height to fly
Scarcely the cloud, the vulture, or the blast,
Has power—and, when the shades of evening lie
On earth and ocean, its carved summits cast
The sunken daylight far through the aërial waste.

XIII.

They bore me to a cavern in the hill
Beneath that column, and unbound me there.
And one did strip me stark; and one did fill
A vessel from the putrid pool; one bare
A lighted torch; and four with friendless care
Guided my steps the cavern-paths along.
Then up a steep and dark and narrow stair
We wound, until the torches' fiery tongue
Amid the gushing day beamless and pallid hung.

XIV.

They raised me to the platform of the pile,
That column's dizzy height:—the grate of brass,
Through which they thrust me, open stood the while,
As to its ponderous and suspended mass,
With chains which eat into the flesh, alas!
With brazen links my naked limbs they bound:
The grate, as they departed to repass,
With horrid clangour fell, and the far sound
Of their retiring steps in the dense gloom was drowned.

XV.

The noon was calm and bright:—around that column
The overhanging sky and circling sea
Spread forth, in silentness profound and solemn,
The darkness of brief frenzy cast on me,
So that I knew not my own misery:
The islands and the mountains in the day
Like clouds reposed afar; and I could see
The town among the woods below that lay,
And the dark rocks which bound the bright and glassy bay.

XVI.

It was so calm that scarce the feathery weed
Sown by some eagle on the topmost stone
Swayed in the air:—so bright that noon did breed
No shadow in the sky beside mine own—
Mine, and the shadow of my chain alone.
Below, the smoke of roofs involved in flame
Rested like night; all else was clearly shown
In the broad glare,—yet sound to me none came,
But of the living blood that ran within my frame.

XVII.

The peace of madness fled, and ah! too soon
A ship was lying on the sunny main;
Its sails were flagging in the breathless noon—
Its shadow lay beyond. That sight again
Waked with its presence in my trancèd brain
The stings of a known sorrow, keen and cold:
I knew that ship bore Cythna o'er the plain
Of waters, to her blighting slavery sold,
And watched it with such thoughts as must remain untold.

XVIII.

I watched, until the shades of evening wrapped
Earth like an exhalation. Then the bark
Moved, for that calm was by the sunset snapped.
It moved a speck upon the ocean dark:
Soon the wan stars came forth, and I could mark
Its path no more. I sought to close mine eyes,
But, like the balls, their lids were stiff and stark;
I would have risen, but ere that I could rise
My parchèd skin was split with piercing agonies.

XIX.

I gnawed my brazen chain, and sought to sever
Its adamantine links, that I might die:
O Liberty! forgive the base endeavour,
Forgive me if, reserved for victory,
The champion of thy faith e'er sought to fly!—
That starry night, with its clear silence, sent
Tameless resolve which laughed at misery
Into my soul—linkèd remembrance lent
To that such power, to me such a severe content.

XX.

To breathe, to be, to hope—or to despair
And die—I questioned not; nor, though the sun
Its shafts of agony kindling through the air
Moved over me,—nor though, in evening dun,
Or when the stars their visible courses run,
Or morning, the wide universe was spread
In dreary calmness round me,—did I shun
Its presence, nor seek refuge with the dead
From one faint hope whose flower a dropping poison shed.

XXI.

Two days thus passed. I neither raved nor died.
Thirst raged within me, like a scorpion's nest
Built in mine entrails; I had spurned aside
The water-vessel while despair possessed
My thoughts, and now no drop remained. The uprest
Of the third sun brought hunger—but the crust
Which had been left was to my craving breast
Fuel, not food. I chewed the bitter dust,
And bit my bloodless arm, and licked the brazen rust.

XXII.

My brain began to fail when the fourth morn
Burst o'er the golden isles. A fearful sleep,
Which through the caverns dreary and forlorn
Of the riven soul sent its foul dreams to sweep
With whirlwind swiftness—a fall far and deep—
A gulf, a void, a sense of senselessness—
These things dwelt in me, even as shadows keep
Their watch in some dim charnel's loneliness,—
A shoreless sea, a sky sunless and planetless.

XXIII.

The forms which peopled this terrific trance
I well remember. Like a choir of devils,
Around me they involved a giddy dance;
Legions seemed gathering from the misty levels
Of ocean to supply those ceaseless revels,—
Foul ceaseless shadows:—thought could not divide
The actual world from these entangling evils,
Which so bemocked themselves that I descried
All shapes like mine own self hideously multiplied.

XXIV.

The sense of day and night, of false and true,
Was dead within me. Yet two visions burst
That darkness. One, as since that hour I knew,
Was not a phantom of the realms accursed
Where then my spirit dwelt—but, of the first,
I know not yet was it a dream or no.
But both, though not distincter, were immersed
In hues which, when through memory's waste they flow,
Make their divided streams more bright and rapid now.

XXV.

Methought that grate was lifted, and the seven
Who brought me thither four stiff corpses bare,
And from the frieze to the four winds of heaven
Hung them on high by the entangled hair:
Swarthy were three—the fourth was very fair.
As they retired, the golden moon upsprung,
And eagerly, out in the giddy air
Leaning that I might eat, I stretched and clung
Over the shapeless depth in which those corpses hung.

XXVI.

A woman's shape, now lank and cold and blue,
The dwelling of the many-coloured worm,
Hung there; the white and hollow cheek I drew
To my dry lips—what radiance did inform
Those horny eyes? whose was that withered form?
Alas, alas! it seemed that Cythna's ghost
Laughed in those looks, and that the flesh was warm
Within my teeth!—A whirlwind keen as frost
Then in its sinking gulfs my sickening spirit tossed.

XXVII.

Then seemed it that a tameless hurricane
Arose, and bore me in its dark career
Beyond the sun, beyond the stars that wane
On the verge of formless space—it languished there,
And, dying, left a silence lone and drear,
More horrible than famine:—in the deep
The shape of an old man did then appear,
Stately and beautiful; that dreadful sleep
His heavenly smiles dispersed, and I could wake and weep.

XXVIII.

And, when the blinding tears had fallen, I saw
That column and those corpses and the moon,
And felt the poisonous tooth of hunger gnaw
My vitals: I rejoiced, as if the boon
Of senseless death would be accorded soon;—
When from that stony gloom a voice arose,
Solemn and sweet as when low winds attune
The midnight pines; the grate did then unclose,
And on that reverend form the moonlight did repose.

XXIX.

He struck my chains, and gently spake and smiled:
As they were loosened by that hermit old,
Mine eyes were of their madness half beguiled,
To answer those kind looks.—He did enfold
His giant arms around me, to uphold
My wretched frame; my scorchèd limbs he wound
In linen moist and balmy, and as cold
As dew to drooping leaves:—the chain, with sound
Like earthquake, through the chasm of that steep stair did bound,

XXX.

As, lifting me, it fell.—What next I heard
Were billows leaping on the harbour-bar,
And the shrill sea-wind, whose breath idly stirred
My hair;—I looked abroad, and saw a star
Shining beside a sail, and distant far
That mountain and its column, the known mark
Of those who in the wide deep wandering are,—
So that I feared some spirit fell and dark
In trance had laid me thus within a fiendish bark.

XXXI.

For now indeed over the salt sea-billow
I sailed: yet dared not look upon the shape
Of him who ruled the helm, although the pillow
For my light head was hollowed in his lap,
And my bare limbs his mantle did enwrap,—
Fearing it was a fiend. At last, he bent
O'er me his aged face; as if to snap
Those dreadful thoughts, the gentle grandsire bent,
And to my inmost soul his soothing looks he sent.

XXXII.

A soft and healing potion to my lips
At intervals he raised—now looked on high,
To mark if yet the starry giant dips
His zone in the dim sea—now cheeringly,
Though he said little, did he speak to me.
"It is a friend beside thee—take good cheer,
Poor victim, thou art now at liberty!"
I joyed as those, a human tone to hear,
Who in cells deep and lone have languished many a year:—

XXXIII.

A dim and feeble joy, whose glimpses oft
Were quenched in a relapse of wildering dreams.
Yet still methought we sailed, until aloft
The stars of night grew pallid, and the beams
Of morn descended on the ocean-streams;
And still that aged man, so grand and mild,
Tended me, even as some sick mother seems
To hang in hope over a dying child,
Till in the azure east darkness again was piled.

XXXIV.

And then the night-wind, streaming from the shore,
Sent odours dying sweet across the sea,
And the swift boat the little waves which bore
Were cut by its keen keel, though slantingly;
Soon I could hear the leaves sigh, and could see
The myrtle-blossoms starring the dim grove,
As past the pebbly beach the boat did flee
On sidelong wing into a silent cove,
Where ebon pines a shade under the starlight wove.

CANTO IV.

I.

THE old man took the oars, and soon the bark
Smote on the beach beside a tower of stone.
It was a crumbling heap whose portal dark
With blooming ivy-trails was overgrown;
Upon whose floor the spangling sands were strown,
And rarest sea-shells, which the eternal flood,
Slave to the mother of the months, had thrown
Within the walls of that great tower, which stood
A changeling of man's art nursed amid nature's brood.

II.

When the old man his boat had anchored,
He wound me in his arms with tender care;
And very few but kindly words he said,
And bore me through the tower adown a stair,
Whose smooth descent some ceaseless step to wear
For many a year had fallen.—We came at last
To a small chamber which with mosses rare
Was tapestried, where me his soft hands placed
Upon a couch of grass and oak-leaves interlaced.

III.

The moon was darting through the lattices
Its yellow light, warm as the beams of day—
So warm that, to admit the dewy breeze,
The old man opened them; the moonlight lay
Upon a lake whose waters wove their play
Even to the threshold of that lonely home:
Within was seen in the dim wavering ray
The antique sculptured roof, and many a tome
Whose lore had made that sage all that he had become.

IV.

The rock-built barrier of the sea was past,—
And I was on the margin of a lake,
A lonely lake, amid the forests vast
And snowy mountains.—Did my spirit wake
From sleep as many-coloured as the snake
That girds eternity? in life and truth
Might not my heart its cravings ever slake?
Was Cythna then a dream, and all my youth,
And all its hopes and fears, and all its joy and ruth?

V.

Thus madness came again,—a milder madness
Which darkened nought but time's unquiet flow
With supernatural shades of clinging sadness.
That gentle hermit, in my helpless woe,
By my sick couch was busy to and fro,
Like a strong spirit ministrant of good.
When I was healed, he led me forth to show
The wonders of his sylvan solitude,
And we together sate by that isle-fretted flood.

VI.

He knew his soothing words to weave with skill,
From all my madness told: like mine own heart,
Of Cythna would he question me, until
That thrilling name had ceased to make me start,
From his familiar lips. It was not art,
Of wisdom and of justice when he spoke—
When 'mid soft looks of pity there would dart
A glance as keen as is the lightning's stroke
When it doth rive the knots of some ancestral oak.

VII.

Thus slowly from my brain the darkness rolled;
My thoughts their due array did re-assume
Through the enchantments of that hermit old.
Then I bethought me of the glorious doom
Of those who sternly struggle to relume
The lamp of hope o'er man's bewildered lot;
And, sitting by the waters in the gloom
Of eve, to that friend's heart I told my thought—
That heart which had grown old, but had corrupted not.

VIII.

That hoary man had spent his livelong age
In converse with the dead who leave the stamp
Of ever-burning thoughts on many a page,
When they are gone into the senseless damp
Of graves: his spirit thus became a lamp
Of splendour, like to those on which it fed.
Through peopled haunts, the city and the camp,
Deep thirst for knowledge had his footsteps led,
And all the ways of men among mankind he read.

IX.

But custom maketh blind and obdurate
The loftiest hearts :—he had beheld the woe
In which mankind was bound, but deemed that fate
Which made them abject would preserve them so;
And in such faith, some steadfast joy to know,
He sought this cell. But, when fame went abroad
That one in Argolis did undergo
Torture for liberty, and that the crowd
High truths from gifted lips had heard and understood,

X.

And that the multitude was gathering wide,—
His spirit leaped within his aged frame;
In lonely peace he could no more abide,
But to the land on which the victor's flame
Had fed, my native land, the hermit came.
Each heart was there a shield, and every tongue
Was as a sword, of truth—young Laon's name
Rallied their secret hopes, though tyrants sung
Hymns of triumphant joy our scattered tribes among.

XI.

He came to the lone column on the rock,
And with his sweet and mighty eloquence
The hearts of those who watched it did unlock,
And made them melt in tears of penitence.
They gave him entrance free to bear me thence.
"Since this," the old man said, "seven years are spent,
While slowly truth on thy benighted sense
Has crept; the hope which wildered it has lent
Meanwhile to me the power of a sublime intent.

XII.

"Yes, from the records of my youthful state,
And from the lore of bards and sages old,
From whatsoe'er my wakened thoughts create
Out of the hopes of thine aspirings bold,
Have I collected language to unfold
Truth to my countrymen; from shore to shore
Doctrines of human power my words have told;
They have been heard, and men aspire to more
Than they have ever gained or ever lost of yore.

XIII.

"In secret chambers parents read, and weep,
My writings to their babes, no longer blind;
And young men gather when their tyrants sleep,
And vows of faith each to the other bind;
And marriageable maidens, who have pined
With love till life seemed melting through their look,
A warmer zeal, a nobler hope, now find;
And every bosom thus is rapt and shook,
Like autumn's myriad leaves in one swoln mountain-brook.

XIV.

"The tyrants of the Golden City tremble
At voices which are heard about the streets;
The ministers of fraud can scarce dissemble
The lies of their own heart,—but, when one meets
Another at the shrine, he inly weets,
Though he says nothing, that the truth is known;
Murderers are pale upon the judgment-seats;
And gold grows vile even to the wealthy crone;
And laughter fills the fane, and curses shake the throne.

XV.

"Kind thoughts and mighty hopes and gentle deeds
Abound; for fearless love, and the pure law
Of mild equality and peace, succeeds
To faiths which long have held the world in awe,
Bloody and false and cold. As whirlpools draw
All wrecks of ocean to their chasm, the sway
Of thy strong genius, Laon, which foresaw
This hope, compels all spirits to obey,
Which round thy secret strength now throng in wide array.

XVI.

"For I have been thy passive instrument"—
(As thus the old man spake, his countenance
Gleamed on me like a spirit's). "Thou hast lent
To me, to all, the power to advance
Towards this unforeseen deliverance
From our ancestral chains—ay, thou didst rear
That lamp of hope on high which time nor chance
Nor change may not extinguish; and my share
Of good was o'er the world its gathered beams to bear.

XVII.

"But I, alas! am both unknown and old;
And, though the woof of wisdom I know well
To dye in hues of language, I am cold
In seeming, and the hopes which inly dwell
My manners note that I did long repel;—
But Laon's name to the tumultuous throng
Were like the star whose beams the waves compel,
And tempests, and his soul-subduing tongue
Were as a lance to quell the mailèd crest of wrong.

XVIII.

"Perchance blood need not flow, if thou at length
Wouldst rise; perchance the very slaves would spare
Their brethren and themselves. Great is the strength
Of words—for lately did a maiden fair,
Who from her childhood has been taught to bear
The tyrant's heaviest yoke, arise, and make
Her sex the law of truth and freedom hear;
And with these quiet words—'For thine own sake,
I prithee spare me,'—did with ruth so take

XIX.

"All hearts that even the torturer, who had bound
Her meek calm frame, ere it was yet impaled,
Loosened her, weeping then; nor could be found
One human hand to harm her. Unassailed
Therefore she walks through the great city, veiled
In virtue's adamantine eloquence,
'Gainst scorn and death and pain thus trebly mailed,
And blending, in the smiles of that defence,
The serpent and the dove, wisdom and innocence.

XX.

"The wild-eyed women throng around her path:
From their luxurious dungeons, from the dust
Of meaner thralls, from the oppressor's wrath,
Or the caresses of his sated lust,
They congregate: in her they put their trust.
The tyrants send their armèd slaves to quell
Her power; they, even like a thunder-gust
Caught by some forest, bend beneath the spell
Of that young maiden's speech, and to their chiefs rebel.

XXI.

"Thus she doth equal laws and justice teach
To woman, outraged and polluted long;
Gathering the sweetest fruit in human reach
For those fair hands now free, while armèd wrong
Trembles before her look, though it be strong.
Thousands thus dwell beside her,—virgins bright,
And matrons with their babes, a stately throng:
Lovers renew the vows which they did plight
In early faith, and hearts long parted now unite.

XXII.

"And homeless orphans find a home near her;
And those poor victims of the proud, no less,—
Fair wrecks, on whom the smiling world, with stir,
Thrusts the redemption of its wickedness.
In squalid huts, and in its palaces,
Sits Lust alone, while o'er the land is borne
Her voice, whose awful sweetness doth repress
All evil; and her foes relenting turn,
And cast the vote of love in hope's abandoned urn.

XXIII.

"So, in the populous city, a young maiden
Has baffled Havoc of the prey which he
Marks as his own whene'er, with chains o'erladen,
Men make them arms to hurl down tyranny,—
False arbiter between the bound and free;
And o'er the land, in hamlets and in towns,
The multitudes collect tumultuously,
And throng in arms; but tyranny disowns
Their claim, and gathers strength around its trembling thrones.

XXIV.

"Blood soon, although unwillingly, to shed
The free cannot forbear. The queen of slaves,
The hoodwinked angel of the blind and dead,
Custom, with iron mace points to the graves
Where her own standard desolately waves
Over the dust of prophets and of kings.
Many yet stand in her array—'she paves
Her path with human hearts,' and o'er it flings
The wildering gloom of her immeasurable wings.

XXV.

"There is a plain beneath the city's wall,
Bounded by misty mountains, wide and vast;
Millions there lift at Freedom's thrilling call
Ten thousand standards wide; they load the blast
Which bears one sound of many voices past,
And startles on his throne their sceptred foe.
He sits amid his idle pomp aghast,
And that his power hath passed away doth know:
Why pause the victor swords to seal his overthrow?

XXVI.

"The tyrant's guards resistance yet maintain:
Fearless and fierce and hard as beasts of blood,
They stand a speck amid the peopled plain.
Carnage and ruin have been made their food
From infancy—ill has become their good,
And for its hateful sake their will has wove
The chains which eat their hearts. The multitude,
Surrounding them, with words of human love
Seek from their own decay their stubborn minds to move.

XXVII.

"Over the land is felt a sudden pause,
As night and day those ruthless bands around
The watch of love is kept—a trance which awes
The thoughts of men with hope. As, when the sound
Of whirlwind whose fierce blasts the waves and clouds confound
Dies suddenly, the mariner in fear
Feels silence sink upon his heart—thus bound,
The conquerors pause; and oh! may freemen ne'er
Clasp the relentless knees of Dread, the murderer!

XXVIII.

"If blood be shed, 'tis but a change and choice
Of bonds—from slavery to cowardice,—
A wretched fall!—Uplift thy charmed voice!
Pour on those evil men the love that lies
Hovering within those spirit-soothing eyes!
Arise, my friend, farewell!"—As thus he spake,
From the green earth lightly I did arise,
As one out of dim dreams that doth awake,
And looked upon the depth of that reposing lake.

XXIX.

I saw my countenance reflected there;—
And then my youth fell on me like a wind
Descending on still waters. My thin hair
Was prematurely grey; my face was lined
With channels, such as suffering leaves behind,
Not age; my brow was pale; but in my cheek
And lips a flush of gnawing fire did find
Its food and dwelling, though mine eyes might speak
A subtle mind and strong within a frame thus weak.

XXX.

And, though their lustre now was spent and faded,
Yet in my hollow looks and withered mien
The likeness of a shape for which was braided
The brightest woof of genius still was seen—
One who, methought, had gone from the world's scene,
And left it vacant:—'twas her lover's face—
It might resemble her—it once had been
The mirror of her thoughts, and still the grace
Which her mind's shadow cast left there a lingering trace.

XXXI.

What then was I? She slumbered with the dead.
Glory and joy and peace had come and gone.
Doth the cloud perish when the beams are fled
Which steeped its skirts in gold? or, dark and lone,
Doth it not through the paths of night, unknown,
On outspread wings of its own wind upborne,
Pour rain upon the earth? The stars are shown
When the cold moon sharpens her silver horn
Under the sea, and make the wide night not forlorn.

XXXII.

Strengthened in heart, yet sad, that aged man
I left with interchange of looks and tears
And lingering speech, and to the Camp began
My way. O'er many a mountain-chain which rears
Its hundred crests aloft, my spirit bears
My frame,—o'er many a dale and many a moor:
And gaily now meseems serene earth wears

The blosmy Spring's star-bright investiture,—
A vision which aught sad from sadness might allure.

XXXIII.

My powers revived within me, and I went,
As one whom winds waft o'er the bending grass,
Through many a vale of that broad continent.
At night when I reposed, fair dreams did pass
Before my pillow; my own Cythna was,
Not like a child of death, among them ever;—
When I arose from rest, a woful mass
That gentlest sleep seemed from my life to sever,
As if the light of youth were not withdrawn forever.

XXXIV.

Aye as I went, that maiden who had reared
The torch of truth afar, of whose high deeds
The hermit in his pilgrimage had heard,
Haunted my thoughts. Ah! hope its sickness feeds
With whatsoe'er it finds, or flowers or weeds!—
Could she be Cythna? Was that corpse a shade
Such as self-torturing thought from madness breeds?—
Why was this hope not torture? Yet it made
A light around my steps which would not ever fade.

CANTO V.

I.

OVER the utmost hill at length I sped,
A snowy steep:—the moon was hanging low
Over the Asian mountains, and, outspread
The plain, the city, and the camp, below,
Skirted the midnight ocean's glimmering flow;
The city's moonlit spires and myriad lamps
Like stars in a sublunar sky did glow,
And fires blazed far amid the scattered camps,
Like springs of flame which burst where'er swift earthquake stamps.

II.

All slept but those in watchful arms who stood,
And those who sate tending the beacon's light;
And the few sounds from that vast multitude
Made silence more profound.—Oh! what a might
Of human thought was cradled in that night!
How many hearts impenetrably veiled
Beat underneath its shade! what secret fight
Evil and Good, in woven passions mailed,
Waged through that silent throng,—a war that never failed!

III.

And now the Power of Good held victory.
So, through the labyrinth of many a tent,
Among the silent millions who did lie
In innocent sleep, exultingly I went.
The moon had left heaven desert now, but, lent
From eastern morn, the first faint lustre showed
An armèd youth—over his spear he bent
His downward face.—"A friend!" I cried aloud;
And quickly common hopes made freemen understood.

IV.

I sate beside him while the morning beam
Crept slowly over heaven, and talked with him
Of those immortal hopes, a glorious theme,
Which led us forth, until the stars grew dim:
And all the while, methought, his voice did swim,
As if it drownèd in remembrance were
Of thoughts which make the moist eyes overbrim:
At last, when daylight 'gan to fill the air,
He looked on me, and cried in wonder "Thou art here?"

V.

Then, suddenly, I knew it was the youth
In whom its earliest hopes my spirit found;
But envious tongues had stained his spotless truth,
And thoughtless pride his love in silence bound,
And shame and sorrow mine in toils had wound,
Whilst he was innocent, and I deluded.
The truth now came upon me; on the ground
Tears of repenting joy, which fast intruded,
Fell fast, and o'er its peace our mingling spirits brooded.

VI.

Thus while with rapid lips and earnest eyes
We talked, a sound of sweeping conflict, spread
As from the earth, did suddenly arise.
From every tent, roused by that clamour dread,
Our bands outsprung, and seized their arms; we sped
Towards the sound: our tribes were gathering far.
Those sanguine slaves, amid ten thousand dead
Stabbed in their sleep, trampled in treacherous war
The gentle hearts whose power their lives had sought to spare.

VII.

Like rabid snakes that sting some gentle child
Who brings them food when winter false and fair
Allures them forth with its cold smiles, so wild
They rage among the camp;—they overbear
The patriot host—confusion, then despair
Descends like night—when "Laon!" one did cry.
Like a bright ghost from heaven, that shout did scare
The slaves, and, widening through the vaulted sky,
Seemed sent from earth to heaven in sign of victory.

VIII.

In sudden panic those false murderers fled,
Like insect tribes before the northern gale:
But, swifter still, our hosts encompassed
Their shattered ranks, and in a craggy vale,
Where even their fierce despair might nought avail,
Hemmed them around!—And then revenge and fear
Made the high virtue of the patriots fail:
One pointed on his foe the mortal spear—
I rushed before its point, and cried "Forbear, forbear!"

IX.

The spear transfixed my arm that was uplifted
In swift expostulation, and the blood
Gushed round its point. I smiled, and—"Oh! thou gifted
With eloquence which shall not be withstood,
Flow thus," I cried in joy, "thou vital flood,
Until my heart be dry, ere thus the cause
For which thou wert aught worthy be subdued!—
Ah! ye are pale,—ye weep,—your passions pause,—
'Tis well! ye feel the truth of love's benignant laws.

X.

"Soldiers, our brethren and our friends are slain.
Ye murdered them, I think, as they did sleep!
Alas! what have ye done? The slightest pain
Which ye might suffer there were eyes to weep,
But ye have quenched them—there were smiles to steep
Your hearts in balm, but they are lost in woe;
And those whom Love did set his watch to keep.
Around your tents, truth's freedom to bestow,
Ye stabbed as they did sleep—but they forgive ye now."

XI.

"Oh wherefore should ill ever flow from ill,
And pain still keener pain for ever breed?
We all are brethren—even the slaves who kill
For hire are men; and to avenge misdeed
On the misdoer doth but Misery feed
With her own broken heart! O earth, O heaven!
And thou, dread Nature, which to every deed,
And all that lives or is, to be hast given,
Even as to thee have these done ill, and are forgiven!

XII.

"Join then your hands and hearts, and let the past
Be as a grave, which gives not up its dead,
To evil thoughts."—A film then overcast
My sense with dimness, for the wound, which bled
Freshly, swift shadows o'er mine eyes had shed.
When I awoke, I lay 'mid friends and foes,
And earnest countenances on me shed
The light of questioning looks, whilst one did close
My wound with balmiest herbs, and soothed me to repose.

XIII.

And one, whose spear had pierced me, leaned beside
With quivering lips and humid eyes;—and all
Seemed like some brothers on a journey wide
Gone forth, whom now strange meeting did befall
In a strange land round one whom they might call
Their friend, their chief, their father, for assay
Of peril, which had saved them from the thrall
Of death, now suffering. Thus the vast array
Of those fraternal bands were reconciled that day.

XIV.

Lifting the thunder of their acclamation
Towards the city, then the multitude,
And I among them, went in joy—a nation
Made free by love, a mighty brotherhood
Linked by a jealous interchange of good;
A glorious pageant, more magnificent
Than kingly slaves arrayed in gold and blood,
When they return from carnage, and are sent
In triumph bright beneath the populous battlement.

XV.

Afar, the city walls were thronged on high,
And myriads on each giddy turret clung,
And to each spire far lessening in the sky
Bright pennons on the idle winds were hung.
As we approached, a shout of joyance sprung
At once from all the crowd, as if the vast
And peopled earth its boundless skies among
The sudden clamour of delight had cast,
When from before its face some general wreck had passed.

XVI.

Our armies through the city's hundred gates
Were poured, like brooks which to the rocky lair
Of some deep lake, whose silence them awaits,
Throng from the mountains when the storms are there:
And, as we passed through the calm sunny air,
A thousand flower-inwoven crowns were shed,
The token flowers of truth and freedom fair,
And fairest hands bound them on many a head,
Those angels of love's heaven that over all was spread.

XVII.

I trod as one tranced in some rapturous vision.
Those bloody bands so lately reconciled
Were, ever as they went, by the contrition
Of anger turned to love, from ill beguiled,
And every one on them more gently smiled
Because they had done evil:—the sweet awe
Of such mild looks made their own hearts grow mild,
And did with soft attraction ever draw
Their spirits to the love of freedom's equal law.

XVIII.

And they and all in one loud symphony
My name with liberty commingling lifted,
"The friend and the preserver of the free!
The parent of this joy!" and fair eyes, gifted
With feelings caught from one who had uplifted
The light of a great spirit, round me shone;
And all the shapes of this grand scenery shifted
Like restless clouds before the steadfast sun.
Where was that maid? I asked, but it was known of none.

XIX.

Laone was the name her love had chosen,
For she was nameless, and her birth none knew:
Where was Laone now?—The words were frozen
Within my lips with fear; but to subdue
Such dreadful hope to my great task was due,
And, when at length one brought reply that she
To-morrow would appear, I then withdrew
To judge what need for that great throng might be,
For now the stars came thick over the twilight sea.

XX.

Yet need was none for rest or food to care,
Even though that multitude was passing great,
Since each one for the other did prepare
All kindly succour. Therefore to the gate
Of the Imperial House, now desolate,
I passed, and there was found aghast, alone,
The fallen Tyrant.—Silently he sate
Upon the footstool of his golden throne,
Which, starred with sunny gems, in its own lustre shone.

XXI.

Alone, but for one child who led before him
A graceful dance: the only living thing,
Of all the crowd which thither to adore him
Flocked yesterday, who solace sought to bring
In his abandonment.—She knew the king
Had praised her dance of yore; and now she wove
Its circles, aye weeping and murmuring,
'Mid her sad task of unregarded love,
That to no smiles it might his speechless sadness move.

XXII.

She fled to him, and wildly clasped his feet,
When human steps were heard :—he moved nor spoke,
Nor changed his hue, nor raised his looks to meet
The gaze of strangers.—Our loud entrance woke
The echoes of the hall, which circling broke
The calm of its recesses,—like a tomb,
Its sculptured walls vacantly to the stroke
Of footfalls answered, and the twilight's gloom
Lay like a charnel's mist within the radiant dome.

XXIII.

The little child stood up when we came nigh ;
Her lips and cheeks seemed very pale and wan,
But on her forehead and within her eye
Lay beauty, which makes hearts that feed thereon
Sick with excess of sweetness ;—on the throne
She leaned. The king, with gathered brow and lips
Wreathed by long scorn, did inly sneer and frown,
With hue like that when some great painter dips
His pencil in the gloom of earthquake and eclipse.

XXIV.

She stood beside him like a rainbow braided
Within some storm when scarce its shadows vast
From the blue paths of the swift sun have faded.
A sweet and solemn smile, like Cythna's, cast
One moment's light, which made my heart beat fast,
O'er that child's parted lips—a gleam of bliss,
A shade of vanished days. As the tears passed
Which wrapped it, even as with a father's kiss
I pressed those softest eyes in trembling tenderness.

XXV.

The sceptred wretch then from that solitude
I drew, and, of his change compassionate,
With words of sadness soothed his rugged mood.
But he, while pride and fear held deep debate,
With sullen guile of ill-dissembled hate
Glared on me as a toothless snake might glare.
Pity, not scorn, I felt, though desolate
The desolator now, and unaware
The curses which he mocked had caught him by the hair.

XXVI.

I led him forth from that which now might seem
A gorgeous grave: through portals sculptured deep
With imagery beautiful as dream
We went, and left the shades which tend on sleep
Over its unregarded gold to keep
Their silent watch.—The child trod faintingly,
And, as she went, the tears which she did weep
Glanced in the starlight; wildered seemèd she,
And, when I spake, for sobs she could not answer me.

XXVII.

At last the tyrant cried, "She hungers, slave!
Stab her, or give her bread!"—It was a tone
Such as sick fancies in a new-made grave
Might hear. I trembled, for the truth was known:
He with this child had thus been left alone,
And neither had gone forth for food,—but he,
In mingled pride and awe, cowered near his throne,
And she, a nursling of captivity,
Knew nought beyond those walls, nor what such change might be.

XXVIII.

And he was troubled at a charm withdrawn
Thus suddenly; that sceptres ruled no more—
That even from gold the dreadful strength was gone
Which once made all things subject to its power.
Such wonder seized him as if hour by hour
The past had come again; and the swift fall
Of one so great and terrible of yore
To desolateness in the hearts of all
Like wonder stirred who saw such awful change befall.

XXIX.

A mighty crowd, such as the wide land pours
Once in a thousand years, now gathered round
The fallen tyrant;—like the rush of showers
Of hail in spring, pattering along the ground,
Their many footsteps fell—else came no sound
From the wide multitude. That lonely man
Then knew the burthen of his change, and found,
Concealing in the dust his visage wan,
Refuge from the keen looks which through his bosom ran.

XXX.

And he was faint withal. I sate beside him
Upon the earth, and took that child so fair
From his weak arms, that ill might none betide him
Or her. When food was brought to them, her share
To his averted lips the child did bear;
But, when she saw he had enough, she ate,
And wept the while;—the lonely man's despair
Hunger then overcame, and, of his state
Forgetful, on the dust as in a trance he sate.

XXXI.

Slowly the silence of the multitudes
Passed, as when far is heard in some lone dell
The gathering of a wind among the woods.
"And he is fallen!" they cry; "he who did dwell
Like famine or the plague, or aught more fell,
Among our homes, is fallen! the murderer
Who slaked his thirsting soul, as from a well
Of blood and tears, with ruin! He is here!
Sunk in a gulf of scorn from which none may him rear!"

XXXII.

Then was heard—"He who judged, let him be brought
To judgment! Blood for blood cries from the soil
On which his crimes have deep pollution wrought!
Shall Othman only unavenged despoil?
Shall they who by the stress of grinding toil
Wrest from the unwilling earth his luxuries
Perish for crime, while his foul blood may boil
Or creep within his veins at will?—Arise!
And to high Justice make her chosen sacrifice!"

XXXIII.

"What do ye seek? what fear ye," then I cried,
Suddenly starting forth, "that ye should shed
The blood of Othman? If your hearts are tried
In the true love of freedom, cease to dread
This one poor lonely man. Beneath heaven spread
In purest light above us all, through earth,
Maternal earth, who doth her sweet smiles shed
For all, let him go free; until the worth
Of human nature win from these a second birth.

XXXIV.

"What call ye *justice?* Is there one who ne'er
In secret thought has wished another's ill?—
Are ye all pure? Let those stand forth who hear
And tremble not. Shall they insult and kill,
If such they be? their mild eyes can they fill
With the false anger of the hypocrite?
Alas! such were not pure! The chastened will
Of virtue sees that justice is the light
Of love, and not revenge and terror and despite."

XXXV.

The murmur of the people, slowly dying,
Paused as I spake; then those who near me were
Cast gentle looks where the lone man was lying
Shrouding his head, which now that infant fair
Clasped on her lap in silence;—through the air
Sobs were then heard, and many kissed my feet
In pity's madness, and to the despair
Of him whom late they cursed a solace sweet
His very victims brought—soft looks and speeches meet.

XXXVI.

Then to a home for his repose assigned,
Accompanied by the still throng, he went
In silence; where, to soothe his rankling mind,
Some likeness of his ancient state was lent.
And, if his heart could have been innocent
As those who pardoned him, he might have ended
His days in peace; but his straight lips were bent,
Men said, into a smile which guile portended,
A sight with which that child like hope with fear was blended.

XXXVII.

'Twas midnight now, the eve of that great day
Whereon the many nations at whose call
The chains of earth like mist melted away
Decreed to hold a sacred festival,
A rite to attest the equality of all
Who live. So to their homes, to dream or wake,
All went. The sleepless silence did recall
Laone to my thoughts, with hopes that make
The flood recede from which their thirst they seek to slake.

XXXVIII.

The dawn flowed forth, and from its purple fountains
I drank those hopes which make the spirit quail,
As to the plain between the misty mountains
And the great city, with a countenance pale,
I went. It was a sight which might avail
To make men weep exulting tears, for whom
Now first from human power the reverend veil
Was torn, to see Earth from her general womb
Pour forth her swarming sons to a fraternal doom;

XXXIX.

To see far glancing in the misty morning
The signs of that innumerable host;
To hear one sound of many made, the warning
Of earth to heaven from its free children tossed;
While the eternal hills, and the sea lost
In wavering light, and, starring the blue sky,
The city's myriad spires of gold, almost
With human joy made mute society—
Its witnesses with men who must hereafter be;

XL.

To see, like some vast island from the ocean,
The Altar of the Federation rear
Its pile i' the midst,—a work which the devotion
Of millions in one night created there,
Sudden as when the moonrise makes appear
Strange clouds in the east; a marble pyramid
Distinct with steps: that mighty shape did wear
The light of genius; its still shadow hid
Far ships: to know its height the morning mists forbid:—

XLI.

To hear the restless multitudes for ever
Around the base of that great altar flow,
As on some mountain islet burst and shiver
Atlantic waves; and solemnly and slow,
As the wind bore that tumult to and fro,
To feel the dreamlike music, which did swim
Like beams through floating clouds on waves below,
Falling in pauses from that altar dim,
As silver-sounding tongues breathed an aërial hymn.

XLII.

To hear, to see, to live, was on that morn
Lethean joy, so that all those assembled
Cast off their memories of the past outworn.
Two only bosoms with their own life trembled,
And mine was one,—and we had both dissembled.
So with a beating heart I went, and one
Who, having much, covets yet more, resembled,—
A lost and dear possession, which not won,
He walks in lonely gloom beneath the noonday sun.

XLIII.

To the great pyramid I came: its stair
With female choirs was thronged, the loveliest
Among the free, grouped with its sculptures rare.
As I approached, the morning's golden mist,
Which now the wonder-stricken breezes kissed
With their cold lips, fled, and the summit shone
Like Athos seen from Samothracia, dressed
In earliest light, by vintagers. And one
Sate there, a female shape upon an ivory throne:

XLIV.

A form most like the imagined habitant
Of silver exhalations sprung from dawn,
By winds which feed on sunrise woven, to enchant
The faiths of men. All mortal eyes were drawn—
As famished mariners, through strange seas gone,
Gaze on a burning watch-tower—by the light
Of those divinest lineaments. Alone
With thoughts which none could share, from that fair sight
I turned in sickness, for a veil shrouded her countenance bright.

XLV.

And neither did I hear the acclamations
Which, from brief silence bursting, filled the air
With her strange name and mine, from all the nations
Which we, they said, in strength had gathered there
From the sleep of bondage; nor the vision fair
Of that bright pageantry beheld;—but blind
And silent as a breathing corpse did fare,
Leaning upon my friend, till, like a wind
To fevered cheeks, a voice flowed o'er my troubled mind.

XLVI.

Like music of some minstrel heavenly-gifted
To one whom fiends enthrall, this voice to me;
Scarce did I wish her veil to be uplifted,
I was so calm and joyous.—I could see
The platform where we stood, the statues three
Which kept their marble watch on that high shrine,
The multitudes, the mountains, and the sea,—
As, when eclipse hath passed, things sudden shine
To men's astonished eyes most clear and crystalline.

XLVII.

At first Laone spoke most tremulously:
But soon her voice that calmness which it shed
Gathered, and—"Thou art whom I sought to see,
And thou art our first votary here," she said:
"I had a dear friend once, but he is dead!—
And, of all those on the wide earth who breathe,
Thou dost resemble him alone:—I spread
This veil between us two, that thou beneath
Shouldst image one who may have been long lost in death.

XLVIII.

"For this wilt thou not henceforth pardon me?
Yes, but those joys which silence well requite
Forbid reply. Why men have chosen me
To be the priestess of this holiest rite
I scarcely know, but that the floods of light
Which flow over the world have borne me hither
To meet thee, long most dear. And now unite
Thine hand with mine; and may all comfort wither
From both the hearts whose pulse in joy now beats together,

XLIX.

"If our own will as others' law we bind,
If the foul worship trampled here we fear,
If as ourselves we cease to love our kind!"—
She paused, and pointed upwards. Sculptured there
Three shapes around her ivory throne appear.
One was a giant, like a child asleep
On a loose rock, whose grasp crushed, as it were
In dream, sceptres and crowns: and one did keep
Its watchful eyes in doubt whether to smile or weep;

L.

A woman sitting on the sculptured disk
Of the broad earth, and feeding from one breast
A human babe and a young basilisk;
Her looks were sweet as heaven's when loveliest
In autumn eves:—the third image was dressed
In white wings swift as clouds in winter skies;
Beneath his feet, 'mongst ghastliest forms, repressed
Lay Faith, an obscene worm, who sought to rise,
While calmly on the sun he turned his diamond eyes.

LI.

Beside that image then I sate; while she
Stood 'mid the throngs which ever ebbed and flowed,
Like light amid the shadows of the sea
Cast from one cloudless star, and on the crowd
That touch which none who feels forgets bestowed.
And, whilst the sun returned the steadfast gaze
Of the great image, as o'er heaven it glode,
That rite had place; it ceased when sunset's blaze
Burned o'er the isles. All stood in joy and deep amaze

LII.

When in the silence of all spirits there
Laone's voice was felt, and through the air
Her thrilling gestures spoke, most eloquently fair.

I.

"Calm art thou as yon sunset; swift and strong
As new-fledged eagles, beautiful and young,
That float among the blinding beams of morning:
And underneath thy feet writhe Faith and Folly,
Custom and Hell and mortal Melancholy!
Hark! the Earth starts to hear the mighty warning
Of thy voice sublime and holy!
Its free spirits here assembled
See thee, feel thee, know thee now:
To thy voice their hearts have trembled,
Like ten thousand clouds which flow
With one wide wind as it flies.
Wisdom! thy irresistible children rise
To hail thee; and the elements they chain,
And their own will, to swell the glory of thy train.

2.

"O Spirit vast and deep as night and heaven!
Mother and soul of all to which is given
The light of life, the loveliness of being,
Lo! thou dost re-ascend the human heart,
Thy throne of power, almighty as thou wert
In dreams of poets old grown pale by seeing
The shade of thee:—now millions start
To feel thy lightnings through them burning:
Nature, or God, or love, or pleasure,
Or sympathy, the sad tears turning
To mutual smiles, a drainless treasure,
Descends amidst us;—scorn and hate,
Revenge and selfishness, are desolate:—
A hundred nations swear that there shall be
Pity and peace and love among the good and free!

3.

"Eldest of things, divine Equality!
Wisdom and Love are but the slaves of thee,
The angels of thy sway, who pour around thee
Treasures from all the cells of human thought
And from the stars and from the ocean brought,
And the last living heart whose beatings bound thee.
The powerful and the wise had sought
Thy coming; thou, in light descending
O'er the wide land which is thine own,
Like the Spring whose breath is blending
All blasts of fragrance into one,
Comest upon the paths of men!
Earth bares her general bosom to thy ken,
And all her children here in glory meet
To feed upon thy smiles, and clasp thy sacred feet.

4.

"My brethren, we are free! The plains and mountains,
The grey sea-shore, the forests, and the fountains,
Are haunts of happiest dwellers; man and woman,
Their common bondage burst, may freely borrow
From lawless love a solace for their sorrow—
For oft we still must weep, since we are human.
A stormy night's serenest morrow—
Whose showers are pity's gentle tears,

Whose clouds are smiles of those that die
Like infants without hopes or fears,
And whose beams are joys that lie
In blended hearts—now holds dominion;
The dawn of mind, which, upwards on a pinion
Borne swift as sunrise, far illumines space,
And clasps this barren world in its own bright embrace!

5.

"My brethren, we are free! The fruits are glowing
Beneath the stars, and the night-winds are flowing
O'er the ripe corn, the birds and beasts are dreaming.
Never again may blood of bird or beast
Stain with its venomous stream a human feast,
To the pure skies in accusation steaming;
Avenging poisons shall have ceased
To feed disease and fear and madness;
The dwellers of the earth and air
Shall throng around our steps in gladness,
Seeking their food or refuge there.
Our toil from thought all glorious forms shall cull,
To make this earth, our home, more beautiful;
And Science, and her sister Poesy,
Shall clothe in light the fields and cities of the free!

6.

"Victory, victory to the prostrate nations!
Bear witness, night, and ye mute constellations
Who gaze on us from your crystalline cars!
Thoughts have gone forth whose powers can sleep no more!
Victory! Victory! Earth's remotest shore,
Regions which groan beneath the antarctic stars,
The green lands cradled in the roar
Of western waves, and wildernesses
Peopled and vast which skirt the oceans
Where Morning dyes her golden tresses,
Shall soon partake our high emotions.
Kings shall turn pale! Almighty Fear,
The Fiend-God, when our charmèd name he hear,
Shall fade like shadow from his thousand fanes,
While Truth, with Joy enthroned, o'er his lost empire reigns!"

LIII.

Ere she had ceased, the mists of night, entwining
Their dim woof, floated o'er the infinite throng.
She, like a spirit through the darkness shining,
In tones whose sweetness silence did prolong
As if to lingering winds they did belong,
Poured forth her inmost soul: a passionate speech
With wild and thrilling pauses woven among,
Which whoso heard was mute, for it could teach
To rapture like her own all listening hearts to reach.

LIV.

Her voice was as a mountain-stream which sweeps
The withered leaves of autumn to the lake,
And in some deep and narrow bay then sleeps
In the shadow of the shores. As dead leaves wake,
Under the wave, in flowers and herbs which make
Those green depths beautiful when skies are blue,
The multitude so moveless did partake
Such living change, and kindling murmurs flew
As o'er that speechless calm delight and wonder grew.

LV.

Over the plain the throngs were scattered then
In groups around the fires, which from the sea
Even to the gorge of the first mountain-glen
Blazed wide and far. The banquet of the free
Was spread beneath many a dark cypress-tree;
Beneath whose spires which swayed in the red flame
Reclining as they ate, of liberty,
And hope, and justice, and Laone's name,
Earth's children did a woof of happy converse frame.

LVI.

Their feast was such as Earth the general mother
Pours from her fairest bosom, when she smiles
In the embrace of Autumn. To each other
As when some parent fondly reconciles
Her warring children, she their wrath beguiles
With her own sustenance; they relenting weep:—
Such was this festival, which, from their isles
And continents and winds and ocean's deep,
All shapes might throng to share that fly or walk or creep,—

LVII.

Might share in peace and innocence; for gore
Or poison none this festal did pollute,
But, piled on high, an overflowing store
Of pomegranates and citrons, fairest fruit,
Melons and dates and figs, and many a root
Sweet and sustaining, and bright grapes ere yet
Accursèd fire their mild juice could transmute
Into a mortal bane, and brown corn set
In baskets; with pure streams their thirsting lips they wet.

LVIII.

Laone had descended from the shrine;
And every deepest look and holiest mind
Fed on her form, though now those tones divine
Were silent, as she passed. She did unwind
Her veil, as with the crowds of her own kind
She mixed. Some impulse made my heart refrain
From seeking her that night; so I reclined
Amidst a group, where on the utmost plain
A festal watchfire burned beside the dusky main.

LIX.

And joyous was our feast; pathetic talk,
And wit, and harmony of choral strains,
While far Orion o'er the waves did walk
That flow among the isles, held us in chains
Of sweet captivity, which none disdains
Who feels: but, when his zone grew dim in mist
Which clothes the ocean's bosom, o'er the plains
The multitudes went homeward to their rest,
Which that delightful day with its own shadow blessed.

CANTO VI.

I.

Beside the dimness of the glimmering sea,
Weaving swift language from impassioned themes,

With that dear friend I lingered who to me
So late had been restored, beneath the gleams
Of the silver stars,—and ever in soft dreams
Of future love and peace sweet converse lapped
Our willing fancies; till the pallid beams
Of the last watchfire fell, and darkness wrapped
The waves, and each bright chain of floating fire was snapped;

II.

And till we came even to the city's wall
And the great gate. Then, none knew whence or why,
Disquiet on the multitudes did fall:
And first, one pale and breathless passed us by,
And stared and spoke not; then with piercing cry
A troop of wild-eyed women, by the shrieks
Of their own terror driven,—tumultuously
Hither and thither hurrying with pale cheeks,
Each one from fear unknown a sudden refuge seeks.

III.

Then, rallying-cries of treason and of danger
Resounded: and—"They come! to arms! to arms!
The tyrant is amongst us, and the stranger
Comes to enslave us in his name! to arms!"
In vain: for Panic, the pale fiend who charms
Strength to forswear her right, those millions swept
Like waves before the tempest. These alarms
Came to me, as to know their cause I leapt
On the gate's turret, and in rage and grief and scorn I wept!

IV.

For to the north I saw the town on fire,
And its red light made morning pallid now,
Which burst over wide Asia.—Louder, higher,
The yells of victory and the screams of woe
I heard approach, and saw the throng below
Stream through the gates like foam-wrought waterfalls
Fed from a thousand storms—the fearful glow
Of bombs flares overhead—at intervals
The red artillery's bolt mangling among them falls.

V.

And now the horsemen come—and all was done
Swifter than I have spoken. I beheld
Their red swords flash in the unrisen sun.
I rushed among the rout, to have repelled
That miserable flight. One moment quelled
By voice and looks and eloquent despair,
As if reproach from their own hearts withheld
Their steps, they stood; but soon came pouring there
New multitudes, and did those rallied bands o'erbear.

VI.

I strove, as, drifted on some cataract
By irresistible streams, some wretch might strive
Who hears its fatal roar: the files compact
Whelmed me, and from the gate availed to drive
With quickening impulse, as each bolt did rive
Their tanks with bloodier chasm: into the plain
Disgorged at length the dead and the alive,
In one dread mass, were parted, and the stain
Of blood from mortal steel fell o'er the fields like rain.

VII.

For now the despot's bloodhounds, with their prey
Unarmed and unaware, were gorging deep
Their gluttony of death; the loose array
Of horsemen o'er the wide fields murdering sweep,
And with loud laughter for their tyrant reap
A harvest sown with other hopes; the while,
Far overhead, ships from Propontis keep
A killing rain of fire—when the waves smile
As sudden earthquakes light many a volcano isle.

VIII.

Thus sudden, unexpected feast was spread
For the carrion fowls of heaven:—I saw the sight—
I moved—I lived—as o'er the heaps of dead,
Whose stony eyes glared in the morning light,
I trod. To me there came no thought of flight;
But with loud cries of scorn, which whoso heard
That dreaded death felt in his veins the might
Of virtuous shame return, the crowd I stirred,
And desperation's hope in many hearts recurred.

IX.

A band of brothers gathering round me made,
Although unarmed, a steadfast front, and, still
Retreating, with stern looks beneath the shade
Of gathered eyebrows, did the victors fill
With doubt even in success; deliberate will
Inspired our growing troop; not overthrown,
It gained the shelter of a grassy hill:—
And ever still our comrades were hewn down,
And their defenceless limbs beneath our footsteps strown.

X.

Immovably we stood.—In joy I found
Beside me then, firm as a giant pine
Among the mountain-vapours driven around,
The old man whom I loved. His eyes divine
With a mild look of courage answered mine;
And my young friend was near, and ardently
His hand grasped mine a moment. Now the line
Of war extended, to our rallying-cry
As myriads flocked in love and brotherhood to die.

XI.

For ever while the sun was climbing heaven
The horsemen hewed our unarmed myriads down
Safely; though, when by thirst of carnage driven
Too near, those slaves were swiftly overthrown
By hundreds leaping on them. Flesh and bone
Soon made our ghastly ramparts; then the shaft
Of the artillery from the sea was thrown
More fast and fiery, and the conquerors laughed
In pride to hear the wind our screams of torment waft.

XII.

For on one side alone the hill gave shelter,
So vast that phalanx of unconquered men,
And there the living in the blood did welter
Of the dead and dying, which in that green glen,
Like stifled torrents, made a plashy fen
Under the feet. Thus was the butchery waged
While the sun clomb heaven's eastern steep—but, when
It 'gan to sink, a fiercer combat raged,
For in more doubtful strife the armies were engaged.

XIII.

Within a cave upon the hill were found
A bundle of rude pikes, the instrument
Of those who war but on their native ground
For natural rights: a shout of joyance, sent
Even from our hearts, the wide air pierced and rent,
As those few arms the bravest and the best
Seized; and each sixth, thus armed, did now present
A line which covered and sustained the rest,
A confident phalanx, which the foes on every side invest.

XIV.

That onset turned the foes to flight almost.
But soon they saw their present strength, and knew
That coming night would to our resolute host
Bring victory; so, dismounting, close they drew
Their glittering files, and then the combat grew
Unequal but most horrible;—and ever
Our myriads, whom the swift bolt overthrew,
Or the red sword, failed like a mountain river
Which rushes forth in foam to sink in sands forever.

XV.

Sorrow and shame to see with their own kind
Our human brethren mix, like beasts of blood,
To mutual ruin, armed by one behind
Who sits and scoffs!—That friend so mild and good,
Who like its shadow near my youth had stood,
Was stabbed!—my old preserver's hoary hair,
With the flesh clinging to its roots, was strewed
Under my feet! I lost all sense or care,
And like the rest I grew desperate and unaware.

XVI.

The battle became ghastlier. In the midst
I paused, and saw how ugly and how fell,
O Hate! thou art, even when thy life thou shedd'st
For love. The ground in many a little dell
Was broken, up and down whose steeps befell
Alternate victory and defeat; and there
The combatants with rage most horrible
Strove, and their eyes started with cracking stare,
And impotent their tongues they lolled into the air,—

XVII.

Flaccid and foamy, like a mad dog's hanging.
Want, and moon-madness, and the pest's swift bane
When its shafts smite—while yet its bow is twanging—
Have each their mark and sign, some ghastly stain;
And this was thine, O War! of hate and pain
Thou loathèd slave! I saw all shapes of death,
And ministered to many, o'er the plain
While carnage in the sunbeam's warmth did seethe,
Till twilight o'er the east wove her serenest wreath.

XVIII.

The few who yet survived, resolute and firm,
Around me fought. At the decline of day,
Winding above the mountain's snowy term,
New banners shone: they quivered in the ray
Of the sun's unseen orb. Ere night the array
Of fresh troops hèmmed us in. Of those brave bands
I soon survived alone:—and now I lay
Vanquished and faint, the grasp of bloody hands
I felt, and saw on high the glare of falling brands,

XIX.

When on my foes a sudden terror came,
And they fled, scattering.—Lo! with reinless speed
A black Tartarian horse of giant frame
Comes trampling o'er the dead; the living bleed
Beneath the hoofs of that tremendous steed,
On which, like to an angel, robed in white,
Sate one waving a sword. The hosts recede
And fly, as through their ranks with awful might
Sweeps in the shadow of eve that phantom swift and bright.

XX.

And its path made a solitude.—I rose
And marked its coming; it relaxed its course
As it approached me, and the wind that flows
Through night bore accents to mine ear whose force
Might create smiles in death.—The Tartar horse
Paused, and I saw the shape its might which swayed,
And heard her musical pants, like the sweet source
Of waters in the desert, as she said,
"Mount with me, Laon, now!"—I rapidly obeyed.

XXI.

Then "Away! away!" she cried, and stretched her sword
As 'twere a scourge over the courser's head,
And lightly shook the reins.—We spake no word,
But like the vapour of the tempest fled
Over the plain; her dark hair was dispread
Like the pine's locks upon the lingering blast;
Over mine eyes its shadowy strings it spread
Fitfully, and the hills and streams fled fast,
As o'er their glimmering forms the steed's broad shadow passed.

XXII.

And his hoofs ground the rocks to fire and dust,
His strong sides made the torrents rise in spray
And turbulence, as if a whirlwind's gust
Surrounded us;—and still away, away,
Through the desert night we sped, while she alway
Gazed on a mountain which we neared, whose crest,
Crowned with a marble ruin, in the ray
Of the obscure stars gleamed;—its rugged breast
The steed strained up, and then his impulse did arrest;—

XXIII.

A rocky hill which overhung the ocean.
From that lone ruin, when the steed that panted
Paused, might be heard the murmur of the motion
Of waters (as in spots for ever haunted
By the choicest winds of heaven, which are enchanted
To music by the wand of Solitude,
That wizard wild), and the far tents implanted
Upon the plain be seen by those who stood
Thence marking the dark shore of ocean's curvèd flood.

XXIV.

One moment these were heard and seen—another
Passed; and the two who stood beneath that night
Each only heard, or saw, or felt, the other.
As from the lofty steed she did alight,
Cythna (for, from the eyes whose deepest light
Of love and sadness made my lips feel pale
With influence strange of mournfullest delight,
My own sweet Cythna looked) with joy did quail,
And felt her strength in tears of human weakness fail.

XXV.

And for a space in my embrace she rested,
Her head on my unquiet heart reposing,
While my faint arms her languid frame invested.
At length she looked on me, and, half unclosing
Her tremulous lips, said: "Friend, thy bands were losing
The battle, as I stood before the king
In bonds.—I burst them then, and, swiftly choosing
The time, did seize a Tartar's sword, and spring
Upon his horse, and, swift as on the whirlwind's wing,

XXVI.

"Have thou and I been borne beyond pursuer,—
And we are here."—Then, turning to the steed,
She pressed the white moon on his front with pure
And rose-like lips, and many a fragrant weed
From the green ruin plucked, that he might feed;—
But I to a stone seat that maiden led,
And, kissing her fair eyes, said "Thou hast need
Of rest;" and I heaped up the courser's bed
In a green mossy nook, with mountain flowers dispread.

XXVII.

Within that ruin, where a shattered portal
Looks to the eastern stars (abandoned now
By man, to be the home of things immortal,
Memories like awful ghosts which come and go,
And must inherit all he builds below,
When he is gone), a hall stood; o'er whose roof
Fair clinging weeds with ivy pale did grow,
Clasping its grey rents with a verdurous woof,
A hanging dome of leaves, a canopy moon-proof.

XXVIII.

The autumnal winds, as if spell-bound, had made
A natural couch of leaves in that recess,
Which seasons none disturbed,—but, in the shade
Of flowering parasites, did Spring love to dress
With their sweet blooms the wintry loneliness
Of those dead leaves, shedding their stars whene'er
The wandering wind her nurslings might caress;
Whose intertwining fingers ever there
Made music wild and soft that filled the listening air.

XXIX.

We know not where we go, or what sweet dream
May pilot us through caverns strange and fair,
Of far and pathless passion, while the stream
Of life our bark doth on its whirlpools bear,
Spreading swift wings as sails to the dim air:
Nor should we seek to know, so the devotion
Of love and gentle thoughts be heard still there
Louder and louder from the utmost ocean
Of universal life, attuning its commotion.

XXX.

To the pure all things are pure. Oblivion wrapped
Our spirits, and the fearful overthrow
Of public hope was from our being snapped,
Though linkèd years had bound it there; for now
A power, a thirst, a knowledge, which below
All thoughts (like light beyond the atmosphere,
Clothing its clouds with grace) doth ever flow,
Came on us, as we sate in silence there,
Beneath the golden stars of the clear azure air:—

XXXI.

In silence which doth follow talk that causes
The baffled heart to speak with sighs and tears,
When wildering passion swalloweth up the pauses
Of inexpressive speech. The youthful years
Which we together passed, their hopes and fears,
The blood itself which ran within our frames,
That likeness of the features which endears
The thoughts expressed by them, our very names,
And all the wingèd hours which speechless memory claims,

XXXII.

Had found a voice:—and, ere that voice did pass,
The night grew damp and dim, and, through a rent
Of the ruin where we sate, from the morass,
A wandering meteor by some wild wind sent,
Hung high in the green dome, to which it lent
A faint and pallid lustre; while the song
Of blasts, in which its blue hair quivering bent,
Strewed strangest sounds the moving leaves among;
A wondrous light, the sound as of a spirit's tongue.

XXXIII.

The meteor showed the leaves on which we sate;
And Cythna's glowing arms; and the thick ties
Of her soft hair which bent with gathered weight
My neck near hers; her dark and deepening eyes,
Which (as twin phantoms of one star that lies
O'er a dim well move though the star reposes)
Swam in our mute and liquid ecstacies;
Her marble brow; and eager lips, like roses,
With their own fragrance pale, which Spring but half uncloses.

XXXIV.

The meteor to its far morass returned.
The beating of our veins one interval
Made still; and then I felt the blood that burned
Within her frame mingle with mine, and fall
Around my heart like fire; and over all
A mist was spread, the sickness of a deep
And speechless swoon of joy, as might befall
Two disunited spirits when they leap
In union from this earth's obscure and fading sleep.

XXXV.

Was it one moment that confounded thus
All thought, all sense, all feeling, into one
Unutterable power, which shielded us
Even from our own cold looks, when we had gone
Into a wide and wild oblivion
Of tumult and of tenderness? or now
Had ages, such as make the moon and sun,
The seasons and mankind, their changes know,
Left fear and time unfelt by us alone below?

XXXVI.

I know not. What are kisses whose fire clasps
The failing heart in languishment, or limb
Twined within limb? or the quick dying gasps
Of the life meeting, when the faint eyes swim
Through tears of a wide mist boundless and dim,
In one caress? What is the strong control
Which leads the heart that dizzy steep to climb
Where far over the world those vapours roll
Which blend two restless frames in one reposing soul?

XXXVII.

It is the shadow which doth float unseen,
But not unfelt, o'er blind mortality,
Whose divine darkness fled not from that green
And lone recess, where lapped in peace did lie
Our linkèd frames, till from the changing sky
That night and still another day had fled;
And then I saw and felt. The moon was high,
And clouds, as of a coming storm, were spread
Under its orb,—loud winds were gathering overhead.

XXXVIII.

Cythna's sweet lips seemed lurid in the moon,
Her fairest limbs with the night-wind were chill,
And her dark tresses were all loosely strewn
O'er her pale bosom:—all within was still,
And the sweet peace of joy did almost fill
The depth of her unfathomable look;—
And we sate calmly, though that rocky hill
The waves contending in its caverns strook,
For they foreknew the storm, and the grey ruin shook.

XXXIX.

There we unheeding sate, in the communion
Of interchangèd vows which, with a rite
Of faith most sweet and sacred, stamped our union.—
Few were the living hearts which could unite
Like ours, or celebrate a bridal night
With such close sympathies; for they had sprung
From linkèd youth, and from the gentle might
Of earliest love, delayed and cherished long,
Which common hopes and fears made, like a tempest, strong.

XL.

And such is Nature's law divine that those
Who grow together cannot choose but love,
If faith or custom do not interpose,
Or common slavery mar what else might move
All gentlest thoughts. As, in the sacred grove
Which shades the springs of Ethiopian Nile,
That living tree which if the arrowy dove
Strike with her shadow shrinks in fear awhile;
But its own kindred leaves clasps while the sunbeams smile,

XLI.

And clings to them when darkness may dissever
The close caresses of all duller plants
Which bloom on the wide earth;—thus we for ever
Were linked, for love had nursed us in the haunts
Where knowledge from its secret source enchants
Young hearts with the fresh music of its springing,
Ere yet its gathered flood feeds human wants,—
As the great Nile feeds Egypt, ever flinging
Light on the woven boughs which o'er its waves are swinging.

XLII.

The tones of Cythna's voice like echoes were
Of those far murmuring streams; they rose and fell,
Mixed with mine own in the tempestuous air.
And so we sate, until our talk befell
Of the late ruin, swift and horrible,
And how those seeds of hope might yet be sown
Whose fruit is evil's mortal poison. Well
For us, this ruin made a watch-tower lone;
But Cythna's eyes looked faint, and now two days were gone

XLIII.

Since she had food:—therefore I did awaken
The Tartar steed, who, from his ebon mane
Soon as the clinging slumbers he had shaken,
Bent his thin head to seek the brazen rein,
Following me obediently. With pain
Of heart so deep and dread that one caress,
When lips and heart refuse to part again
Till they have told their fill, could scarce express
The anguish of her mute and fearful tenderness,

XLIV.

Cythna beheld me part, as I bestrode
That willing steed. The tempest and the night,
Which gave my path its safety as I rode
Down the ravine of rocks, did soon unite
The darkness and the tumult of their might
Borne on all winds.—Far through the streaming rain
Floating, at intervals the garments white
Of Cythna gleamed, and her voice once again
Came to me on the gust; and soon I reached the plain.

XLV.

I dreaded not the tempest, nor did he
Who bore me, but his eyeballs wide and red
Turned on the lightning's cleft exultingly;
And, when the earth beneath his tameless tread
Shook with the sullen thunder, he would spread
His nostrils to the blast, and joyously
Mock the fierce peal with neighings;—thus we sped
O'er the lit plain, and soon I could descry
Where Death and Fire had gorged the spoil of Victory.

XLVI.

There was a desolate village in a wood,
Whose bloom-inwoven leaves now scattering fed
The hungry storm; it was a place of blood,
A heap of hearthless walls;—the flames were dead
Within those dwellings now,—the life had fled
From all those corpses now,—but the wide sky,
Flooded with lightning, was ribbed overhead
By the black rafters, and around did lie
Women and babes and men slaughtered confusedly.

XLVII.

Beside the fountain in the market-place
Dismounting, I beheld those corpses stare
With horny eyes upon each other's face,
And on the earth, and on the vacant air,
And upon me, close to the waters where
I stooped to slake my thirst.—I shrank to taste,
For the salt bitterness of blood was there;
But tied the steed beside, and sought in haste
If any yet survived amid that ghastly waste.

XLVIII.

No living thing was there beside one woman
Whom I found wandering in the streets, and she
Was withered from a likeness of aught human
Into a fiend, by some strange misery.
Soon as she heard my steps, she leaped on me,
And glued her burning lips to mine, and laughed
With a loud, long, and frantic laugh of glee,
And cried, "Now, mortal, thou hast deeply quaffed
The Plague's blue kisses—soon millions shall pledge the draught!

XLIX.

"My name is Pestilence. This bosom dry
Once fed two babes—a sister and a brother.
When I came home, one in the blood did lie
Of three death-wounds—the flames had ate the other!
Since then I have no longer been a mother,
But I am Pestilence;—hither and thither
I flit about, that I may slay and smother;—
All lips which I have kissed must surely wither,
But Death's—if thou art he, we'll go to work together!

L.

"What seek'st thou here? the moonlight comes in flashes,—
The dew is rising dankly from the dell;
'Twill moisten her! and thou shalt see the gashes
In my sweet boy—now full of worms—But tell
First what thou seek'st."—"I seek for food."—"'Tis well,
Thou shalt have food; Famine, my paramour,
Waits for us at the feast—cruel and fell
Is Famine, but he drives not from his door
Those whom these lips have kissed, alone. No more, no more!"

LI.

As thus she spake, she grasped me with the strength
Of madness, and by many a ruined hearth
She led, and over many a corpse. At length
We came to a lone hut, where, on the earth
Which made its floor, she in her ghastly mirth,
Gathering from all those homes now desolate,
Had piled three heaps of loaves, making a dearth
Among the dead—round which she set in state
A ring of cold stiff babes; silent and stark they sate.

LII.

She leaped upon a pile, and lifted high
Her mad looks to the lightning, and cried: "Eat!
Share the great feast—to-morrow we must die!"
And then she spurned the loaves with her pale feet,
Towards her bloodless guests. That sight to meet,
Mine eyes and my heart ached, and, but that she
Who loved me did with absent looks defeat
Despair, I might have raved in sympathy;
But now I took the food that woman offered me;

LIII.

And, vainly having with her madness striven
If I might win her to return with me,
Departed. In the eastern beams of heaven
The lightning now grew pallid—rapidly
As by the shore of the tempestuous sea
The dark steed bore me: and the mountain grey
Soon echoed to his hoofs, and I could see
Cythna among the rocks, where she alway
Had sate with anxious eyes fixed on the lingering day.

LIV.

And joy was ours to meet. She was most pale,
Famished, and wet, and weary; so I cast
My arms around her, lest her steps should fail
As to our home we went,—and, thus embraced,
Her full heart seemed a deeper joy to taste
Than e'er the prosperous know. The steed behind
Trod peacefully along the mountain waste.
We reached our home ere morning could unbind
Night's latest veil, and on our bridal couch reclined.

LV.

Her chilled heart having cherished in my bosom,
And sweetest kisses passed, we two did share
Our peaceful meal. As an autumnal blossom
Which spreads its shrunk leaves in the sunny air
After cold showers, like rainbows woven there,—
Thus in her lips and cheeks the vital spirit
Mantled, and in her eyes an atmosphere
Of health and hope; and sorrow languished near it,
And fear, and all that dark despondence doth inherit.

CANTO VII.

I.

So we sate joyous as the morning ray
Which fed upon the wrecks of night and storm
Now lingering on the winds; light airs did play
Among the dewy weeds, the sun was warm,
And we sate linked in the inwoven charm
Of converse and caresses sweet and deep,—
Speechless caresses, talk that might disarm

Time, though he wield the darts of death and sleep,
And those thrice mortal barbs in his own poison steep.

II.

I told her of my sufferings and my madness;
And how, awakened from that dreamy mood
By liberty's uprise, the strength of gladness
Came to my spirit in my solitude;
And all that now I was; while tears pursued
Each other down her fair and listening cheek
Fast as the thoughts which fed them, like a flood
From sunbright dales;—and, when I ceased to speak,
Her accents soft and sweet the pausing air did wake.

III.

She told me a strange tale of strange endurance,
Like broken memories of many a heart
Woven into one; to which no firm assurance,
So wild were they, could her own faith impart.
She said that not a tear did dare to start
From the swoln brain, and that her thoughts were firm,
When from all mortal hope she did depart,
Borne by those slaves across the ocean's term;
And that she reached the port without one fear infirm.

IV.

One was she among many there, the thralls
Of the cold tyrant's cruel lust: and they
Laughed mournfully in those polluted halls;
But she was calm and sad, musing alway
On loftiest enterprise, till on a day
The tyrant heard her singing to her lute
A wild and sad and spirit-thrilling lay,
Like winds that die in wastes—one moment mute
The evil thoughts it made which did his breast pollute.

V.

Even when he saw her wondrous loveliness,
One moment to great Nature's sacred power
He bent, and was no longer passionless.
But, when he bade her to his secret bower
Be borne a loveless victim, and she tore
Her locks in agony, and her words of flame
And mightier looks availed not; then he bore
Again his load of slavery, and became
A king, a heartless beast, a pageant and a name.

VI.

She told me what a loathsome agony
Is that when selfishness mocks love's delight,
Foul as in dream's most fearful imagery
To dally with the mowing dead. That night
All torture, fear, or horror, made seem light
Which the soul dreams or knows; and, when the day
Shone on her awful frenzy, from the sight,
Where like a spirit in fleshly chains she lay
Struggling, aghast and pale the tyrant fled away.

VII.

Her madness was a beam of light, a power
Which dawned through the rent soul; and words it gave,
Gestures, and looks, such as in whirlwinds bore,
Which might not be withstood, whence none could save
All who approached their sphere, like some calm wave
Vexed into whirlpools by the chasms beneath.
And sympathy made each attendant slave
Fearless and free, and they began to breathe
Deep curses, like the voice of flames far underneath.

VIII.

The King felt pale upon his noonday throne.
At night two slaves he to her chamber sent.
One was a green and wrinkled eunuch, grown
From human shape into an instrument
Of all things ill—distorted, bowed, and bent:—
The other was a wretch from infancy
Made dumb by poison, who nought knew or meant
But to obey; from the fire-isles came he,
A diver lean and strong, of Oman's coral sea.

IX.

They bore her to a bark, and the swift stroke
Of silent rowers clove the blue moonlight seas,
Until upon their path the morning broke.
They anchored then where, be there calm or breeze,
The gloomiest of the drear Symplegades
Shakes with the sleepless surge;—the Ethiop there
Wound his long arms around her, and with knees
Like iron clasped her feet, and plunged with her
Among the closing waves out of the boundless air.

X.

"Swift as an eagle stooping from the plain
Of morning light into some shadowy wood,
He plunged through the green silence of the main,
Through many a cavern which the eternal flood
Had scooped as dark lairs for its monster brood;
And among mighty shapes which fled in wonder,
And among mightier shadows which pursued
His heels, he wound: until the dark rocks under
He touched a golden chain—a sound arose like thunder.

XI.

"A stunning clang of massive bolts redoubling
Beneath the deep—a burst of waters driven
As from the roots of the sea, raging and bubbling:
And in that roof of crags a space was riven
Through which there shone the emerald beams of heaven,
Shot through the lines of many waves inwoven
Like sunlight through acacia woods at even,
Through which his way the diver having cloven
Passed like a spark sent up out of a burning oven.

XII.

"And then," she said, "he laid me in a cave
Above the waters, by that chasm of sea,
A fountain round and vast, in which the wave,
Imprisoned, boiled and leaped perpetually,—
Down which, one moment resting, he did flee,
Winning the adverse depth; that spacious cell
Like an hupaithric temple wide and high,
Whose aëry dome is inaccessible, [fell.
Was pierced with one round cleft through which the sunbeams

XIII.

"Below, the fountain's brink was richly paven
With the deep's wealth, coral and pearl, and sand
Like spangling gold, and purple shells engraven
With mystic legends by no mortal hand,
Left there when, thronging to the moon's command,
The gathering waves rent the Hesperian gate
Of mountains; and on such bright floor did stand
Columns, and shapes like statues, and the state
Of kingless thrones, which earth did in her heart create.

XIV.

"The fiend of madness which had made its prey
Of my poor heart was lulled to sleep awhile.
There was an interval of many a day;
And a sea-eagle brought me food the while,
Whose nest was built in that untrodden isle,
And who to be the gaoler had been taught
Of that strange dungeon; as a friend whose smile
Like light and rest at morn and even is sought
That wild bird was to me, till madness misery brought:—

XV.

"The misery of a madness slow and creeping,
Which made the earth seem fire, the sea seem air,
And the white clouds of noon, which oft were sleeping
In the blue heaven so beautiful and fair,
Like hosts of ghastly shadows hovering there;
And the sea-eagle looked a fiend who bore
Thy mangled limbs for food!—Thus all things were
Transformed into the agony which I wore,
Even as a poisoned robe around my bosom's core.

XVI.

"Again I knew the day and night fast fleeing,
The eagle and the fountain and the air.
Another frenzy came—there seemed a being
Within me—a strange load my heart did bear,
As if some living thing had made its lair
Even in the fountains of my life:—a long
And wondrous vision, wrought from my despair,
Then grew, like sweet reality among
Dim visionary woes, an unreposing throng.

XVII.

"Methought I was about to be a mother.
Month after month went by, and still I dreamed
That we should soon be all to one another,
I and my child; and still new pulses seemed
To beat beside my heart, and still I deemed
There was a babe within—and, when the rain
Of winter through the rifted cavern streamed,
Methought, after a lapse of lingering pain,
I saw that lovely shape which near my heart had lain.

XVIII.

"It was a babe, beautiful from its birth,—
It was like thee, dear love! its eyes were thine,
Its brow, its lips, and so upon the earth
It laid its fingers as now rest on mine
Thine own, beloved!—'twas a dream divine;—
Even to remember how it fled, how swift,
How utterly, might make the heart repine,—
Though 'twas a dream."—Then Cythna did uplift
Her looks on mine, as if some doubt she sought to shift:

XIX.

A doubt which would not flee, a tenderness
Of questioning grief, a source of thronging tears:
Which having passed, as one whom sobs oppress
She spoke: "Yes, in the wilderness of years
Her memory aye like a green home appears.
She sucked her fill even at this breast, sweet love,
For many months. I had no mortal fears;
Methought I felt her lips and breath approve
It was a human thing which to my bosom clove.

XX.

"I watched the dawn of her first smiles; and soon,
When zenith-stars were trembling on the wave,
Or when the beams of the invisible moon
Or sun from many a prism within the cave
Their gem-born shadows to the water gave,
Her looks would hunt them, and with outspread hand,
From the swift lights which might that fountain pave,
She would mark one, and laugh when, that command
Slighting, it lingered there, and could not understand.

XXI.

"Methought her looks began to talk with me:
And no articulate sounds, but something sweet
Her lips would frame,—so sweet it could not be
That it was meaningless; her touch would meet
Mine, and our pulses calmly flow and beat
In response while we slept; and, on a day
When I was happiest in that strange retreat,
With heaps of golden shells we two did play,—
Both infants weaving wings for time's perpetual way.

XXII.

"Ere night, methought, her waning eyes were grown
Weary with joy; and, tired with our delight,
We on the earth like sister twins lay down
On one fair mother's bosom.—From that night
She fled; like those illusions clear and bright
Which dwell in lakes when the red moon on high
Pause ere it wakens tempest;—and her flight,
Though 'twas the death of brainless fantasy,
Yet smote my lonesome heart more than all misery.

XXIII.

"It seemed that, in the dreary night, the diver
Who brought me thither came again, and bore
My child away. I saw the waters quiver
When he so swiftly sunk, as once before.
Then morning came:—it shone even as of yore,
But I was changed—the very life was gone
Out of my heart—I wasted more and more
Day after day, and, sitting there alone,
Vexed the inconstant waves with my perpetual moan.

XXIV.

"I was no longer mad, and yet methought
My breasts were swoln and changed:—in every vein
The blood stood still one moment, while that thought
Was passing—with a gush of sickening pain
It ebbed even to its withered springs again,—
When my wan eyes in stern resolve I turned
From that most strange delusion, which would fain
Have waked the dream for which my spirit yearned
With more than human love, then left it unreturned.

XXV.

"So, now my reason was restored to me,
I struggled with that dream, which, like a beast
Most fierce and beauteous, in my memory
Had made its lair, and on my heart did feast;
But all that cave and all its shapes, possessed
By thoughts which could not fade, renewed each one
Some smile, some look, some gesture, which had blessed
Me heretofore: I, sitting there alone,
Vexed the inconstant waves with my perpetual moan.

XXVI.

"Time passed, I know not whether months or years;
For day nor night nor change of seasons made
Its note, but thoughts and unavailing tears:
And I became at last even as a shade,
A smoke, a cloud on which the winds have preyed
Till it be thin as air; until, one even,
A nautilus upon the fountain played,
Spreading his azure sail where breath of heaven
Descended not, among the waves and whirlpools driven.

XXVII.

"And, when the eagle came, that lovely thing,
Oaring with rosy feet its silver boat,
Fled near me as for shelter. On slow wing
The eagle, hovering o'er his prey, did float;
But, when he saw that I with fear did note
His purpose, proffering my own food to him,
The eager plumes subsided on his throat—
He came where that bright child of sea did swim,
And o'er it cast in peace his shadow broad and dim.

XXVIII.

"This wakened me, it gave me human strength:
And hope, I know not whence or wherefore, rose.
But I resumed my ancient powers at length;
My spirit felt again like one of those,
Like thine, whose fate it is to make the woes
Of humankind their prey. What was this cave?
Its deep foundation no firm purpose knows,
Immutable, resistless, strong to save,
Like mind while yet it mocks the all-devouring grave.

XXIX.

"And where was Laon? might my heart be dead
While that far dearer heart could move and be,
Or whilst over the earth the pall was spread
Which I had sworn to rend? I might be free,
Could I but win that friendly bird to me
To bring me ropes; and long in vain I sought,
By intercourse of mutual imagery
Of objects, if such aid he could be taught;
But fruit and flowers and boughs, yet never ropes, he brought.

XXX.

"We live in our own world, and mine was made
From glorious fantasies of hope departed:
Aye we are darkened with their floating shade,
Or cast a lustre on them. Time imparted
Such power to me I became fearless-hearted;
My eye and voice grew firm, calm was my mind,
And piercing, like the morn now it has darted
Its lustre on all hidden things behind
Yon dim and fading clouds which load the weary wind.

XXXI.

"My mind became the book through which I grew
Wise in all human wisdom, and its cave,
Which like a mine I rifled through and through,
To me the keeping of its secrets gave,—
One mind, the type of all, the moveless wave
Whose calm reflects all moving things that are—
Necessity and love and life, the grave
And sympathy, fountains of hope and fear,
Justice and truth and time and the world's natural sphere.

XXXII.

"And on the sand would I make signs to range
These woofs, as they were woven, of my thought;
Clear elemental shapes, whose smallest change
A subtler language within language wrought:
The key of truths which once were dimly taught
In old Crotona;—and sweet melodies
Of love in that lone solitude I caught
From mine own voice in dream, when thy dear eyes
Shone through my sleep, and did that utterance harmonize.

XXXIII.

"Thy songs were winds whereon I fled at will,
As in a winged chariot, o'er the plain
Of crystal youth; and thou wert there to fill
My heart with joy, and there we sate again
On the grey margin of the glimmering main:—
Happy as then, but wiser far, for we
Smiled on the flowery grave in which were lain
Fear, Faith, and Slavery; and mankind was free,
Equal and pure and wise, in wisdom's prophecy.

XXXIV.

"For to my will my fancies were as slaves
To do their sweet and subtle ministries;
And oft from that bright fountain's shadowy waves
They would make human throngs gather and rise
To combat with my overflowing eyes
And voice made deep with passion. Thus I grew
Familiar with the shock and the surprise
And war of earthly minds, from which I drew
The power which has been mine to frame their thoughts anew.

XXXV.

"And thus my prison was the populous earth;
Where I saw—even as misery dreams of morn
Before the east has given its glory birth—
Religion's pomp made desolate by the scorn
Of Wisdom's faintest smile, and thrones uptorn,
And dwellings of mild people interspersed
With undivided fields of ripening corn,
And love made free, a hope which we have nursed
Even with our blood and tears;—until its glory burst.

XXXVI.

"All is not lost! There is some recompense
For hope whose fountain can be thus profound;—
Even throned Evil's splendid impotence
Girt by its hell of power, the secret sound
Of hymns to truth and freedom, the dread bound
Of life and death passed fearlessly and well,
Dungeons wherein the high resolve is found,
Racks which degraded woman's greatness tell,
And what may else be good and irresistible.

XXXVII.

"Such are the thoughts which, like the fires that flare
In storm-encompassed isles, we cherish yet
In this dark ruin—such were mine even there.
As in its sleep some odorous violet,
While yet its leaves with nightly dews are wet,
Breathes in prophetic dreams of day's uprise,
Or as, ere Scythian frost in fear has met
Spring's messengers descending from the skies,
The buds foreknow their life—this hope must ever rise.

XXXVIII.

"So years had passed, when sudden earthquake rent
The depth of ocean, and the cavern cracked
With sound, as if the world's wide continent
Had fallen in universal ruin wracked:
And through the cleft streamed in one cataract
The stifling waters.—When I woke, the flood,
Whose banded waves that crystal cave had sacked,
Was ebbing round me, and my bright abode
Before me yawned—a chasm desert, and bare, and broad.

XXXIX.

"Above me was the sky, beneath the sea:
I stood upon a point of shattered stone,
And heard loose rocks rushing tumultuously
With splash and shock into the deep—anon
All ceased, and there was silence wide and lone.
I felt that I was free! The ocean-spray
Quivered beneath my feet, the broad heaven shone
Around, and in my hair the winds did play,
Lingering as they pursued their unimpeded way.

XL.

"My spirit moved upon the sea like wind,
Which round some thymy cape will lag and hover,
Though it can wake the still cloud, and unbind
The strength of tempest. Day was almost over,
When through the fading light I could discover
A ship approaching—its white sails were fed
With the north wind—its moving shade did cover
The twilight deep;—the mariners in dread
Cast anchor when they saw new rocks around them spread.

XLI.

"And, when they saw one sitting on a crag,
They sent a boat to me;—the sailors rowed
In awe through many a new and fearful jag
Of overhanging rock, through which there flowed
The foam of streams that cannot make abode.
They came and questioned me; but, when they heard
My voice, they became silent, and they stood
And moved as men in whom new love had stirred
Deep thoughts: so to the ship we passed without a word.

CANTO VIII.

I.

"I SATE beside the steersman then, and, gazing
Upon the west, cried, 'Spread the sails! Behold!
The sinking moon is like a watch-tower blazing
Over the mountains yet; the City of Gold
Yon cape alone does from the sight withhold.
The stream is fleet—the north breathes steadily
Beneath the stars; they tremble with the cold.
Ye cannot rest upon the dreary sea;—
Haste, haste to the warm home of happier destiny!'

II.

"The mariners obeyed. The Captain stood
Aloof, and, whispering to the pilot, said:
'Alas, alas! I fear we are pursued
By wicked ghosts! a phantom of the dead,
The night before we sailed, came to my bed
In dream, like that!' The pilot then replied:
'It cannot be—she is a human maid—
Her low voice makes you weep—she is some bride
Or daughter of high birth—she can be nought beside.'

III.

"We passed the islets, borne by wind and stream,
And, as we sailed, the mariners came near
And thronged around to listen. In the gleam
Of the pale moon I stood, as one whom fear
May not attaint, and my calm voice did rear:
'Ye are all human—yon broad moon gives light
To millions who the selfsame likeness wear.
Even while I speak—beneath this very night,
Their thoughts flow on like ours, in sadness or delight.

IV.

"'What dream ye? Your own hands have built a home,
Even for yourselves on a beloved shore:
For some, fond eyes are pining till they come;
How they will greet him when his toils are o'er,
And laughing babes rush from the well-known door!
Is this your care? ye toil for your own good—
Ye feel and think. Has some Immortal Power
Such purposes? or, in a human mood,
Dream ye that God thus builds for man in solitude?

V.

"'What is that Power? Ye mock yourselves, and give
A human heart to what ye cannot know;
As if the cause of life could think and live!
'Twere as if man's own works should feel, and show
The hopes and fears and thoughts from which they flow,
And he be like to them! Lo! Plague is free
To waste, blight, poison, earthquake, hail, and snow,
Disease, and want, and worse necessity
Of hate and ill, and pride, and fear, and tyranny!

VI.

"'What is that Power? Some moon-struck sophist stood
Watching the shade from his own soul upthrown
Fill heaven and darken earth, and in such mood
The form he saw and worshiped was his own,
His likeness in the world's vast mirror shown;—
And 'twere an innocent dream, but that a faith
Nursed by fear's dew of poison grows thereon,
And that men say that Power has chosen Death
On all who scorn its laws to wreak immortal wrath.

VII.

"'Men say they have seen God, and heard from God,
Or known from others who have known such things,
And that his will is all our law, a rod
To scourge us into slaves; that priests and kings,
Custom, domestic sway, ay all that brings
Man's freeborn soul beneath the oppressor's heel,
Are his strong ministers; and that the stings
Of death will make the wise his vengeance feel,
Though truth and virtue arm their hearts with tenfold steel.

VIII.

"'And it is said that God will punish wrong;
Yes, add despair to crime, and pain to pain;
And deepest hell and deathless snakes among
Will bind the wretch on whom is fixed a stain
Which like a plague, a burthen, and a bane,
Clung to him while he lived;—for love and hate,
Virtue and vice, they say, are difference vain—
The will of strength is right. This human state
Tyrants, that they may rule, with lies thus desolate.

IX.

"'Alas, what strength? Opinion is more frail
Than yon dim cloud now fading on the moon
Even while we gaze, though it awhile avail
To hide the orb of truth: and every throne
Of earth or heaven, though shadow, rests thereon,
One shape of many names. For this ye plough
The barren waves of ocean; hence each one
Is slave or tyrant; all betray and bow,
Command or kill or fear, or wreak or suffer woe.

X.

"'Its names are each a sign which maketh holy
All power—ay, the ghost, the dream, the shade,
Of power—lust, falsehood, hate, and pride, and folly;
The pattern whence all fraud and wrong is made,
A law to which mankind has been betrayed;
And human love is as the name well known
Of a dear mother whom the murderer laid
In bloody grave, and, into darkness thrown,
Gathered her wildered babes around him as his own.

XI.

"'Oh! love (who to the heart of wandering man
Art as the calm to ocean's weary waves),
Justice, or truth, or joy—those only can
From slavery and religion's labyrinth caves
Guide us, as one clear star the seaman saves.
To give to all an equal share of good;
To track the steps of Freedom, though through graves
She pass; to suffer all in patient mood;
To weep for crime, though stained with thy friend's dearest blood;

XII.

"'To feel the peace of self-contentment's lot;
To own all sympathies, and outrage none;
And in the inmost bowers of sense and thought,
Until life's sunny day is quite gone down,
To sit and smile with Joy, or, not alone,
To kiss salt tears from the worn cheek of Woe;
To live as if to love and live were one;—
This is not faith or law, nor those who bow
To thrones on heaven or earth such destiny may know

XIII.

"'But children near their parents tremble now,
Because they must obey. One rules another;
And, as one Power rules both high and low,
So man is made the captive of his brother;
And Hate is throned on high with Fear her mother,
Above the Highest:—and those fountain-cells
Whence love yet flowed when faith had choked all other
Are darkened—Woman as the bond-slave dwells
Of man, a slave; and life is poisoned in its wells.

XIV.

"'Man seeks for gold in mines, that he may weave
A lasting chain for his own slavery;—
In fear and restless care that he may live,
He toils for others, who must ever be
The joyless thralls of like captivity;
He murders, for his chiefs delight in ruin;
He builds the altar, that its idol's fee
May be his very blood; he is pursuing—
Oh blind and willing wretch!—his own obscure undoing.

XV.

"'Woman!—she is his slave, she has become
A thing I weep to speak—the child of scorn,
The outcast of a desolated home.
Falsehood and fear and toil like waves have worn
Channels upon her cheek, which smiles adorn
As calm decks the false ocean:—well ye know
What woman is, for none of woman born
Can choose but drain the bitter dregs of woe,
Which ever from the oppressed to the oppressors flow.

XVI.

"'This need not be. Ye might arise, and will
That gold should lose its power, and thrones their glory;
That love, which none may bind, be free to fill
The world, like light; and evil faith, grown hoary
With crime, be quenched and die.—Yon promontory
Even now eclipses the descending moon!—
Dungeons and palaces are transitory—
High temples fade like vapour—Man alone
Remains, whose will has power when all beside is gone.

XVII.

"'Let all be free and equal!—From your hearts
I feel an echo; through my inmost frame,
Like sweetest sound, seeking its mate, it darts.—
Whence come ye, friends? Alas! I cannot name
All that I read of sorrow, toil, and shame,
On your worn faces; as in legends old
Which make immortal the disastrous fame
Of conquerors and impostors false and bold,
The discord of your hearts I in your looks behold.

XVIII.

"'Whence come ye, friends? from pouring human blood
Forth on the earth? Or bring ye steel and gold,
That kings may dupe and slay the multitude?
Or from the famished poor, pale, weak, and cold,
Bear ye the earnings of their toil? Unfold!
Speak! Are your hands in slaughter's sanguine hue
Stained freshly? have your hearts in guile grown old?
Know yourselves thus,—ye shall be pure as dew,
And I will be a friend and sister unto you.

XIX.

"'Disguise it not—we have one human heart—
All mortal thoughts confess a common home.
Blush not for what may to thyself impart
Stains of inevitable crime: the doom
Is this which has, or may, or must, become
Thine, and all humankind's. Ye are the spoil
Which Time thus marks for the devouring tomb;
Thou and thy thoughts—and they—and all the toil
Wherewith ye twine the rings of life's perpetual coil.

XX.

"'Disguise it not—ye blush for what ye hate,
And Enmity is sister unto Shame;
Look on your mind—it is the book of fate—
Ah! it is dark with many a blazoned name
Of misery—all are mirrors of the same;
But the dark fiend who with his iron pen,
Dipped in scorn's fiery poison, makes his fame
Enduring there, would o'er the heads of men
Pass harmless, if they scorned to make their hearts his den.

XXI.

"'Yes, it is Hate—that shapeless fiendly thing
Of many names, all evil, some divine—
Whom self-contempt arms with a mortal sting;
Which—when the heart its snaky folds entwine
Is wasted quite, and when it doth repine
To gorge such bitter prey—on all beside
It turns with ninefold rage; as, with his twine
When amphisbæna some fair bird has tied,
Soon o'er the putrid mass he threats on every side.

XXII.

"'Reproach not thine own soul, but know thyself;
Nor hate another's crime, nor loathe thine own.
It is the dark idolatry of self
Which, when our thoughts and actions once are gone,
Demands that man should weep and bleed and groan;
Oh vacant expiation!—Be at rest:
The past is Death's, the future is thine own;
And love and joy can make the foulest breast
A paradise of flowers where peace might build her nest.

XXIII.

"'Speak thou! whence come ye?'—A youth made reply:
'Wearily, wearily o'er the boundless deep
We sail.—Thou readest well the misery
Told in these faded eyes; but much doth sleep
Within, which there the poor heart loves to keep,
Or dare not write on the dishonoured brow.
Even from our childhood have we learned to steep
The bread of slavery in the tears of woe,
And never dreamed of hope or refuge until now.

XXIV.

"'Yes—I must speak—my secret would have perished
Even with the heart it wasted, as a brand
Fades in the dying flame whose life it cherished,
But that no human bosom can withstand
Thee, wondrous lady, and the mild command
Of thy keen eyes:—yes, we are wretched slaves,
Who from their wonted loves and native land
Are reft, and bear o'er the dividing waves
The unregarded prey of calm and happy graves.

XXV.

"'We drag afar from pastoral vales the fairest
Among the daughters of those mountains lone;
We drag them there where all things best and rarest
Are stained and trampled. Years have come and gone
Since, like the ship which bears me, I have known
No thought;—but now the eyes of one dear maid
On mine with light of mutual love have shone:
She is my life,—I am but as the shade
Of her—a smoke sent up from ashes, soon to fade:—

XXVI.

"'For she must perish in the tyrant's hall—
Alas, alas!'—He ceased, and by the sail
Sate cowering—but his sobs were heard by all;
And still before the ocean and the gale
The ship fled fast till the stars 'gan to fail.
All round me gathered with mute countenance;
The seamen gazed, the pilot worn and pale
With toil, the captain with grey locks, whose glance
Met mine in restless awe—they stood as in a trance.

XXVII.

"'Recede not! pause not now! Thou art grown old,
But Hope will make thee young, for Hope and Youth
Are children of one mother, Love. Behold!
The eternal stars gaze on us!—is the truth
Within your soul? care for your own, or ruth
For others' sufferings? do ye thirst to bear
A heart which not the serpent custom's tooth
May violate?—Be free! and, even here,
Swear to be firm till death!' They cried 'We swear! we swear!'

XXVIII.

"The very darkness shook, as with a blast
Of subterranean thunder, at the cry;
The hollow shore its thousand echoes cast
Into the night, as if the sea and sky
And earth rejoiced with new-born liberty,
For in that name they swore! Bolts were undrawn,
And on the deck, with unaccustomed eye,

The captives gazing stood, and every one
Shrank as the inconstant torch upon her countenance shone.

XXIX.

"They were earth's purest children, young and fair,
With eyes the shrines of unawakened thought,
And brows as bright as Spring or morning, ere
Dark time had there its evil legend wrought
In characters of cloud which wither not.—
The change was like a dream to them; but soon
They knew the glory of their altered lot.
In the bright wisdom of youth's breathless noon,
Sweet talk and smiles and sighs all bosoms did attune.

XXX.

"But one was mute. Her cheeks and lips most fair,
Changing their hue like lilies newly blown
Beneath a bright acacia's shadowy hair
Waved by the wind amid the sunny noon,
Showed that her soul was quivering; and full soon
That youth arose, and breathlessly did look
On her and me, as for some speechless boon:
I smiled, and both their hands in mine I took,
And felt a soft delight from what their spirits shook.

CANTO IX.

I.

"THAT night we anchored in a woody bay;
And sleep no more around us dared to hover
Than, when all doubt and fear has passed away,
It shades the couch of some unresting lover
Whose heart is now at rest. Thus night passed over
In mutual joy:—around, a forest grew
Of poplars and dark oaks, whose shade did cover
The waning stars pranked in the waters blue,
And trembled in the wind which from the morning flew.

II.

"The joyous mariners and each free maiden
Now brought from the deep forest many a bough,
With woodland spoil most innocently laden;
Soon wreaths of budding foliage seemed to flow
Over the mast and sails, the stern and prow
Were canopied with blooming boughs,—the while
On the slant sun's path o'er the waves we go
Rejoicing, like the dwellers of an isle
Doomed to pursue those waves that cannot cease to smile.

III.

"The many ships spotting the dark-blue deep
With snowy sails fled fast as ours came nigh,
In fear and wonder; and on every steep
Thousands did gaze. They heard the startling cry,
Like Earth's own voice lifted unconquerably
To all her children, the unbounded mirth,
The glorious joy of thy name—Liberty!
They heard!—As o'er the mountains of the earth
From peak to peak leap on the beams of morning's birth:

IV.

"So from that cry over the boundless hills
Sudden was caught one universal sound,
Like a volcano's voice whose thunder fills
Remotest skies,—such glorious madness found
A path through human hearts with stream which drowned
Its struggling fears and cares, dark custom's brood;
They knew not whence it came, but felt around
A wide contagion poured—they called aloud
On Liberty—that name lived on the sunny flood.

V.

"We reached the port.—Alas! from many spirits
The wisdom which had waked that cry was fled,
Like the brief glory which dark heaven inherits
From the false dawn, which fades ere it is spread,
Upon the night's devouring darkness shed:
Yet soon bright day will burst—even like a chasm
Of fire, to burn the shrouds outworn and dead
Which wrap the world; a wide enthusiasm,
To cleanse the fevered world as with an earthquake's spasm.

VI.

"I walked through the great city then, but free
From shame or fear; those toil-worn mariners
And happy maidens did encompass me.
And, like a subterranean wind that stirs
Some forest among caves, the hopes and fears
From every human soul a murmur strange
Made as I passed: and many wept, with tears
Of joy and awe, and wingèd thoughts did range,
And half-extinguished words which prophesied of change.

VII.

"For with strong speech I tore the veil that hid
Nature and truth and liberty and love,—
As one who from some mountain's pyramid
Points to the unrisen sun—the shades approve
His truth, and flee from every stream and grove.
Thus, gentle thoughts did many a bosom fill,—
Wisdom the mail of tried affections wove
For many a heart, and tameless scorn of ill
Thrice steeped in molten steel the unconquerable will.

VIII.

"Some said I was a maniac wild and lost;
Some, that I scarce had risen from the grave,
The Prophet's virgin bride, a heavenly ghost:—
Some said I was a fiend from my weird cave,
Who had stolen human shape, and o'er the wave,
The forest, and the mountain, came;—some said
I was the child of God, sent down to save
Women from bonds and death, and on my head
The burthen of their sins would frightfully be laid.

IX.

"But soon my human words found sympathy
In human hearts. The purest and the best,
As friend with friend, made common cause with me,
And they were few, but resolute;—the rest,
Ere yet success the enterprise had blessed,
Leagued with me in their hearts;—their meals, their slumber,
Their hourly occupations, were possessed
By hopes which I had armed to overnumber
Those hosts of meaner cares which life's strong wings encumber.

X.

"But chiefly women, whom my voice did waken
From their cold, careless, willing slavery,
Sought me: one truth their dreary prison has shaken,
They looked around, and lo! they became free!
Their many tyrants, sitting desolately
In slave-deserted halls, could none restrain;
For wrath's red fire had withered in the eye
Whose lightning once was death,—nor fear nor gain
Could tempt one captive now to lock another's chain.

XI.

"Those who were sent to bind me wept, and felt
Their minds outsoar the bonds which clasped them round,
Even as a waxen shape may waste and melt
In the white furnace; and a visioned swound,
A pause of hope and awe, the city bound,
Which—like the silence of a tempest's birth,
When in its awful shadow it has wound
The sun, the wind, the ocean, and the earth—
Hung terrible, ere yet the lightnings have leapt forth.

XII.

"Like clouds inwoven in the silent sky
By winds from distant regions meeting there,
In the high name of truth and liberty
Around the city millions gathered were
By hopes which sprang from many a hidden lair;
Words which the lore of truth in hues of grace
Arrayed; thine own wild songs which in the air
Like homeless odours floated; and the name
Of thee, and many a tongue which thou hadst dipped in flame.

XIII.

"The Tyrant knew his power was gone; but Fear,
The nurse of Vengeance, bade him wait the event—
That perfidy and custom, gold and prayer,
And whatsoe'er, when force is impotent,
To fraud the sceptre of the world has lent,
Might, as he judged, confirm his failing sway.
Therefore throughout the streets the priests he sent
To curse the rebels.—To their gods did they
For earthquake, plague, and want, kneel in the public way.

XIV.

"And grave and hoary men were bribed to tell,
From seats where law is made the slave of wrong,
How glorious Athens in her splendour fell
Because her sons were free,—and that, among
Mankind, the many to the few belong,
By Heaven, and nature, and necessity.
They said that age was truth, and that the young
Marred with wild hopes the peace of slavery,
With which old times and men had quelled the vain and free.

XV.

"And with the falsehood of their poisonous lips
They breathed on the enduring memory
Of sages and of bards a brief eclipse.
There was one teacher, who Necessity
Had armed with strength and wrong against mankind,
His slave and his avenger aye to be;
That we were weak and sinful, frail and blind;
And that the will of one was peace, and we
Should seek for nought on earth but toil and misery;—

XVI.

"For thus we might avoid the hell hereafter.
So spake the hypocrites, who cursed and lied.
Alas! their sway was past, and tears and laughter
Clung to their hoary hair, withering the pride
Which in their hollow hearts dared still abide;
And yet obscener slaves with smoother brow,
And sneers on their strait lips, thin, blue, and wide,
Said that the rule of men was over now,
And hence the subject world to woman's will must bow.

XVII.

"And gold was scattered through the streets, and wine
Flowed at a hundred feasts within the wall.
In vain! The steady towers in heaven did shine
As they were wont; nor at the priestly call
Left Plague her banquet in the Ethiop's hall,
Nor Famine from the rich man's portal came,
Where at her ease she ever preys on all
Who throng to kneel for food: nor fear nor shame
Nor faith nor discord dimmed hope's newly kindled flame.

XVIII.

"For gold was as a god whose faith began
To fade, so that its worshipers were few;
And faith itself, which in the heart of man
Gives shape, voice, name, to spectral terror, knew
Its downfall, as the altars lonelier grew,
Till the priests stood alone within the fane.
The shafts of falsehood unpolluting flew;
And the cold sneers of calumny were vain
The union of the free with discord's brand to stain.

XIX.

"The rest thou knowest.—Lo!—we two are here—
We have survived a ruin wide and deep.
Strange thoughts are mine.—I cannot grieve nor fear;
Sitting with thee upon this lonely steep,
I smile, though human love should make me weep.
We have survived a joy that knows no sorrow,
And I do feel a mighty calmness creep
Over my heart, which can no longer borrow
Its hues from chance or change, dark children of to-morrow.

XX.

"We know not what will come.—Yet, Laon dearest,
Cythna shall be the prophetess of love;
Her lips shall rob thee of the grace thou wearest,
To hide thy heart, and clothe the shapes which rove
Within the homeless future's wintry grove;
For I now, sitting thus beside thee, seem
Even with thy breath and blood to live and move,
And violence and wrong are as a dream
Which rolls from steadfast truth,—an unreturning stream.

XXI.

"The blasts of Autumn drive the winged seeds
Over the earth,—next come the snows, and rain,
And frosts, and storms, which dreary Winter leads
Out of his Scythian cave, a savage train;
Behold! Spring sweeps over the world again,
Shedding soft dews from her etherial wings;
Flowers on the mountains, fruits over the plain,
And music on the waves and woods, she flings,
And love on all that lives, and calm on lifeless things.

XXII.

"O Spring! of hope and love and youth and gladness
Wind-winged emblem! brightest, best, and fairest!
Whence comest thou when with dark Winter's sadness
The tears that fade in sunny smiles thou sharest?
Sister of joy! thou art the child who wearest
Thy mother's dying smile, tender and sweet;
Thy mother Autumn, for whose grave thou bearest
Fresh flowers, and beams like flowers, with gentle feet
Disturbing not the leaves which are her winding-sheet.

XXIII.

"Virtue, and hope, and love, like light and heaven,
Surround the world. We are their chosen slaves.
Has not the whirlwind of our spirit driven
Truth's deathless germs to thought's remotest caves?
Lo, winter comes!—the grief of many graves,
The frost of death, the tempest of the sword,
The flood of tyranny, whose sanguine waves
Stagnate like ice at Faith the enchanter's word,
And bind all human hearts in its repose abhorred!

XXIV.

"The seeds are sleeping in the soil. Meanwhile
The tyrant peoples dungeons with his prey;
Pale victims on the guarded scaffold smile
Because they cannot speak; and, day by day,
The moon of wasting science wanes away
Among her stars; and in that darkness vast
The sons of earth to their foul idols pray;
And grey priests triumph; and like blight or blast
A shade of selfish care o'er human looks is cast.

XXV.

"This is the winter of the world;—and here
We die, even as the winds of autumn fade,
Expiring in the frore and foggy air.—
Behold! Spring comes, though we must pass who made
The promise of its birth, even as the shade
Which from our death, as from a mountain, flings
The future, a broad sunrise; thus arrayed
As with the plumes of overshadowing wings,
From its dark gulf of chains earth like an eagle springs.

XXVI.

"O dearest love! we shall be dead and cold
Before this morn may on the world arise:
Wouldst thou the glory of its dawn behold?
Alas! gaze not on me, but turn thine eyes
On thine own heart—it is a paradise
Which everlasting Spring has made its own;
And, while drear winter fills the naked skies,
Sweet streams of sunny thought, and flowers fresh blown,
Are there, and weave their sounds and odours into one.

XXVII.

"In their own hearts the earnest of the hope
Which made them great the good will ever find;
And, though some envious shade may interlope
Between the effect and it, one comes behind
Who aye the future to the past will bind—
Necessity, whose sightless strength for ever
Evil with evil, good with good, must wind
In bands of union which no power may sever:
They must bring forth their kind, and be divided never!

XXVIII.

"The good and mighty of departed ages
Are in their graves,—the innocent and free,
Heroes, and poets, and prevailing sages,
Who leave the vesture of their majesty
To adorn and clothe this naked world;—and we
Are like to them. Such perish; but they leave
All hope or love or truth or liberty
Whose forms their mighty spirits could conceive,
To be a rule and law to ages that survive.

XXIX.

"So be the turf heaped over our remains
Even in our happy youth, and that strange lot,
Whate'er it be, when in these mingling veins
The blood is still, be ours; let sense and thought
Pass from our being, or be numbered not
Among the things that are; let those who come
Behind, for whom our steadfast will has bought
A calm inheritance, a glorious doom,
Insult with careless tread our undivided tomb!

XXX.

"Our many thoughts and deeds, our life and love,
Our happiness, and all that we have been,
Immortally must live and burn and move
When we shall be no more. The world has seen
A type of peace; and,—as some most serene
And lovely spot to a poor maniac's eye,
After long years, some sweet and moving scene
Of youthful hope, returning suddenly,
Quells his long madness—thus man shall remember thee.

XXXI.

"And calumny meanwhile shall feed on us
As worms devour the dead, and near the throne
And at the altar most accepted thus
Shall sneers and curses be;—what we have done
None shall dare vouch, though it be truly known.
That record shall remain when they must pass
Who built their pride on its oblivion,
And fame, in human hope which sculptured was,
Survive the perished scrolls of unenduring brass:—

XXXII.

"The while we two, beloved, must depart,
And Sense and Reason, those enchanters fair
Whose wand of power is hope, would bid the heart
That gazed beyond the wormy grave despair.
These eyes, these lips, this blood, seem darkly there
To fade in hideous ruin; no calm sleep,
Peopling with golden dreams the stagnant air,
Seems our obscure and rotting eyes to steep
In joy;—but senseless death—a ruin dark and deep.

XXXIII.

"These are blind fancies. Reason cannot know
What sense can neither feel nor thought conceive;
There is delusion in the world, and woe,
And fear, and pain. We know not whence we live,
Or why, or how; or what mute Power may give
Their being to each plant and star and beast,
Or even these thoughts.—Come near me! I do weave
A chain I cannot break—I am possessed
With thoughts too swift and strong for one lone human breast,

XXXIV.

"Yes, yes—thy kiss is sweet, thy lips are warm!
Oh willingly, belovèd, would these eyes,
Might they no more drink being from thy form,
Even as to sleep whence we again arise,
Close their faint orbs in death. I fear nor prize
Aught that can now betide, unshared by thee.
Yes, love, when wisdom fails, makes Cythna wise;
Darkness and death, if death be true, must be
Dearer than life and hope if unenjoyed with thee.

XXXV.

"Alas! our thoughts flow on with stream whose waters
Return not to their fountain: earth and heaven,
The ocean and the sun, the clouds their daughters,
Winter and Spring, and morn and noon and even,
All that we are or know, is darkly driven
Towards one gulf.—Lo! what a change is come
Since I first spake—but time shall be forgiven,
Though it change all but thee!" She ceased—night's gloom
Meanwhile had fallen on earth from the sky's sunless dome.

XXXVI.

Though she had ceased, her countenance, uplifted
To heaven, still spake, with solemn glory bright;
Her dark deep eyes, her lips whose motions gifted
The air they breathed with love, her locks undight.
"Fair star of life and love," I cried, "my soul's delight,
Why lookest thou on the crystalline skies?
Oh that my spirit were yon Heaven of night
Which gazes on thee with its thousand eyes!"
She turned to me and smiled—that smile was paradise!

CANTO X.

I.

WAS there a human spirit in the steed,
That thus with his proud voice, ere night was gone,

He broke our linkèd rest? or do indeed
All living things a common nature own,
And thought erect a universal throne,
Where many shapes one tribute ever bear?
And Earth, their mutual mother, does she groan
To see her sons contend? and makes she bare
Her breast, that all in peace its drainless stores may share?

II.

I have heard friendly sounds from many a tongue
Which was not human—the lone nightingale
Has answered me with her most soothing song
Out of her ivy bower, when I sate pale
With grief, and sighed beneath; from many a dale
The antelopes who flocked for food have spoken
With happy sounds and motions that avail
Like man's own speech: and such was now the token
Of waning night, whose calm by that proud neigh was broken.

III.

Each night, that mighty steed bore me abroad,
And I returned with food to our retreat,
And dark intelligence. The blood which flowed
Over the fields had stained the courser's feet;
Soon the dust drinks that bitter dew. Then meet
The vulture and the wild-dog and the snake,
The wolf and the hyæna grey, and eat
The dead in horrid truce: their throngs did make,
Behind the steed, a chasm like waves in a ship's wake.

IV.

For from the utmost realms of earth came pouring
The banded slaves whom every despot sent
At that throned traitor's summons. Like the roaring
Of fire, whose floods the wild deer circumvent
In the scorched pastures of the south; so bent
The armies of the leaguèd kings around
Their files of steel and flame;—the continent
Trembled, as with a zone of ruin bound,
Beneath their feet; the sea shook with their navies' sound.

V.

From every nation of the earth they came,
The multitude of moving heartless things
Whom slaves call men: obediently they came,
Like sheep whom from the fold the shepherd brings
To the stall, red with blood. Their many kings
Led them thus erring from their native land,—
Tartar and Frank, and millions whom the wings
Of Indian breezes lull; and many a band
The Arctic Anarch sent, and Idumea's sand,

VI.

Fertile in prodigies and lies.—So there
Strange natures made a brotherhood of ill.
The desert savage ceased to grasp in fear
His Asian shield and bow when, at the will
Of Europe's subtler son, the bolt would kill
Some shepherd sitting on a rock secure;
But smiles of wondering joy his face would fill,
And savage sympathy. Those slaves impure
Each one the other thus from ill to ill did lure.

VII.

For traitorously did that foul Tyrant robe
His countenance in lies. Even at the hour
When he was snatched from death, then o'er the globe,
With secret signs from many a mountain tower,
With smoke by day and fire by night (the power
Of kings and priests), those dark conspirators
He called:—they knew his cause their own, and swore
Like wolves and serpents to their mutual wars
Strange truce, with many a rite which earth and heaven abhors.

VIII.

Myriads had come—millions were on their way;
The Tyrant passed, surrounded by the steel
Of hired assassins, through the public way,
Choked with his country's dead;—his footsteps reel
On the fresh blood—he smiles. "Ay, now I feel
I am a king in truth!" he said; and took
His royal seat, and bade the torturing wheel
Be brought, and fire, and pincers, and the hook,
And scorpions, that his soul on its revenge might look.

IX.

"But first go slay the rebels.—Why return
The victor bands?" he said. "Millions yet live,
Of whom the weakest with one word might turn
The scales of victory yet; let none survive
But those within the walls. Each fifth shall give
The expiation for his brethren, here.—
Go forth, and waste and kill."—"O king, forgive
My speech," a soldier answered; "but we fear
The spirits of the night, and morn is drawing near.

X.

"For we were slaying still without remorse,
And now that dreadful chief beneath my hand
Defenceless lay, when on a hell-black horse
An angel bright as day, waving a brand
Which flashed among the stars, passed."—"Dost thou stand
Parleying with me, thou wretch?" the king replied.
"Slaves, bind him to the wheel; and of this band
Whoso will drag that woman to his side
That scared him thus may burn his dearest foe beside;

XI.

"And gold and glory shall be his.—Go forth!"
They rushed into the plain.—Loud was the roar
Of their career: the horsemen shook the earth;
The wheeled artillery's speed the pavement tore;
The infantry, file after file, did pour
Their clouds on the utmost hills. Five days they slew
Among the wasted fields; the sixth saw gore
Stream through the city; on the seventh the dew
Of slaughter became stiff, and there was peace anew.

XII.

Peace in the desert fields and villages,
Between the glutted beasts and mangled dead:
Peace in the silent streets, save when the cries
Of victims, to their fiery judgment led,
Made pale *their* voiceless lips who seemed to dread,
Even in their dearest kindred, lest some tongue
Be faithless to the fear yet unbetrayed:
Peace in the tyrant's palace, where the throng
Waste the triumphal hours in festival and song.

XIII.

Day after day the burning sun rolled on
Over the death-polluted land. It came
Out of the east like fire, and fiercely shone
A lamp of autumn, ripening with its flame
The few lone ears of corn;—the sky became
Stagnate with heat, so that each cloud and blast
Languished and died; the thirsting air did claim
All moisture, and a rotting vapour passed
From the unburied dead, invisible and fast.

XIV.

First want, then plague, came on the beasts; their food
Failed, and they drew the breath of its decay.
Millions on millions, whom the scent of blood
Had lured, or who from regions far away
Had tracked the hosts in festival array,
From their dark deserts, gaunt and wasting now,
Stalked like fell shades among their perished prey;
In their green eyes a strange disease did glow,—
They sank in hideous spasm, or pains severe and slow.

XV.

The fish were poisoned in the streams; the birds
In the green woods perished; the insect race
Was withered up; the scattered flocks and herds
Who had survived the wild beasts' hungry chase
Died moaning, each upon the other's face
In helpless agony gazing; round the city
All night the lean hyænas their sad case
Like starving infants wailed—a woeful ditty—
And many a mother wept, pierced with unnatural pity.

XVI.

Amid the aërial minarets on high
The Ethiopian vultures fluttering fell
From their long line of brethren in the sky,
Startling the concourse of mankind.—Too well
These signs the coming mischief did foretell:—
Strange panic first, a deep and sickening dread,
Within each heart, like ice, did sink and dwell,—
A voiceless thought of evil, which did spread
With the quick glance of eyes, like withering lightnings shed.

XVII.

Day after day, when the year wanes, the frosts
Strip its green crown of leaves, till all is bare;
So on those strange and congregated hosts
Came Famine, a swift shadow, and the air
Groaned with the burthen of a new despair;
Famine, than whom Misrule no deadlier daughter
Feeds from her thousand breasts, though sleeping there
With lidless eyes lie Faith and Plague and Slaughter,
A ghastly brood conceived of Lethe's sullen water.

XVIII.

There was no food. The corn was trampled down,
The flocks and herds had perished; on the shore
The dead and putrid fish were ever thrown:
The deeps were foodless, and the winds no more
Creaked with the weight of birds, but, as before
Those winged things sprang forth, were void of shade;
The vines and orchards, autumn's golden store,
Were burned; so that the meanest food was weighed
With gold, and avarice died before the god it made.

XIX.

There was no corn—in the wide market-place
All loathliest things, even human flesh, was sold;
They weighed it in small scales—and many a face
Was fixed in eager horror then. His gold
The miser brought; the tender maid, grown bold
Through hunger, bared her scorned charms in vain;
The mother brought her eldest-born, controlled
By instinct blind as love, but turned again,
And bade her infant suck, and died in silent pain.

XX.

Then fell blue plague upon the race of man.
"Oh for the sheathed steel, so late which gave
Oblivion to the dead when the streets ran
With brothers' blood! Oh that the earthquake's grave
Would gape, or ocean lift its stifling wave!"
Vain cries! Throughout the streets, thousands, pursued
Each by his fiery torture, howl and rave,
Or sit in frenzy's unimagined mood
Upon fresh heaps of dead—a ghastly multitude.

XXI.

It was not hunger now, but thirst. Each well
Was choked with rotting corpses, and became
A cauldron of green mist made visible
At sunrise. Thither still the myriads came,
Seeking to quench the agony of the flame
Which raged like poison through their bursting veins;
Naked they were from torture, without shame,
Spotted with nameless scars and lurid blains,
Childhood and youth and age writhing in savage pains.

XXII.

It was not thirst but madness. Many saw
Their own lean image everywhere; it went
A ghastlier self beside them, till the awe
Of that dread sight to self-destruction sent
Those shrieking victims. Some, ere life was spent,
Sought, with a horrid sympathy, to shed
Contagion on the sound; and others rent
Their matted hair, and cried aloud, "We tread
On fire! the avenging Power his hell on earth has spread!"

XXIII.

Sometimes the living by the dead were hid.
Near the great fountain in the public square,
Where corpses made a crumbling pyramid
Under the sun, was heard one stifled prayer
For life, in the hot silence of the air;
And strange 'twas 'mid that hideous heap to see
Some shrouded in their long and golden hair,
As if not dead but slumbering quietly,
Like forms which sculptors carve, then love to agony.

XXIV.

Famine had spared the palace of the king:—
He rioted in festival the while,
He and his guards and priests; but plague did fling
One shadow upon all. Famine can smile
On him who brings it food, and pass, with guile
Of thankful falsehood, like a courtier grey,
The house-dog of the throne; but many a mile
Comes plague, a winged wolf, who loathes alway
The garbage and the scum that strangers make her prey.

XXV.

So, near the throne, amid the gorgeous feast,
Sheathed in resplendent arms, or loosely dight
To luxury, ere the mockery yet had ceased
That lingered on his lips, the warrior's might
Was loosened, and a new and ghastlier night
In dreams of frenzy lapped his eyes; he fell
Headlong, or with stiff eyeballs sate upright
Among the guests, or raving mad did tell
Strange truths, a dying seer of dark oppression's hell.

XXVI.

The princes and the priests were pale with terror;
That monstrous faith wherewith they ruled mankind
Fell, like a shaft loosed by the bowman's error,
On their own hearts: they sought,—and they could find
No refuge—'twas the blind who led the blind.
So through the desolate streets to the high fane
The many-tongued and endless armies wind
In sad procession: each among the train
To his own idol lifts his supplications vain.

XXVII.

"O God!" they cried, "we know our secret pride
Has scorned thee, and thy worship, and thy name;
Secure in human power, we have defied
Thy fearful might; we bend in fear and shame
Before thy presence; with the dust we claim
Kindred. Be merciful, O King of Heaven!
Most justly have we suffered for thy fame
Made dim; but be at length our sins forgiven,
Ere to despair and death thy worshipers be driven.

XXVIII.

"O King of Glory! Thou alone hast power!
Who can resist thy will? who can restrain
Thy wrath when on the guilty thou dost shower
The shafts of thy revenge, a blistering rain?
Greatest and best, be merciful again!
Have we not stabbed thine enemies? and made
The earth an altar, and the heavens a fane,
Where thou wert worshiped with their blood? and laid
Those hearts in dust which would thy searchless works have weighed?

XXIX.

"Well didst thou loosen on this impious city
Thine angels of revenge: recall them now!
Thy worshipers, abased, here kneel for pity,
And bind their souls by an immortal vow:
We swear by thee—and to our oath do thou
Give sanction from thine hell of fiends and flame—
That we will kill with fire and torments slow
The last of those who mocked thy holy name,
And scorned the sacred laws thy prophets did proclaim."

XXX.

Thus they with trembling limbs and pallid lips
Worshiped their own hearts' image, dim and vast,
Scared by the shade wherewith they would eclipse
The light of other minds;—troubled they passed
From the great temple. Fiercely still and fast
The arrows of the plague among them fell,
And they on one another gazed aghast,
And through the hosts contention wild befell,
As each of his own god the wondrous works did tell.

XXXI.

And Oromaze, and Christ, and Mahomet,
Moses and Buddh, Zerdusht and Brahm and Foh,
A tumult of strange names, which never met
Before as watchwords of a single woe,
Arose. Each raging votary 'gan to throw
Aloft his armèd hands, and each did howl
"Our God alone is God!"—And slaughter now
Would have gone forth, when from beneath a cowl
A voice came forth which pierced like ice through every soul.

XXXII.

'Twas an Iberian priest from whom it came;
A zealous man who led the legioned West,
With words which faith and pride had steeped in flame,
To quell the unbelievers. A dire guest
Even to his friends was he, for in his breast
Did hate and guile lie watchful, intertwined,
Twin serpents in one deep and winding nest;
He loathed all faith beside his own, and pined
To wreak his fear of Heaven in vengeance on mankind.

XXXIII.

But more he loathed and hated the clear light
Of wisdom and free thought, and more did fear
Lest, kindled once, its beams might pierce the night,
Even where his idol stood; for far and near
Did many a heart in Europe leap to hear
That faith and tyranny were trampled down,—
Many a pale victim doomed for truth to share
The murderer's cell, or see with helpless groan
The priests his children drag for slaves to serve their own.

XXXIV.

He dared not kill the infidels with fire
Or steel, in Europe; the slow agonies
Of legal torture mocked his keen desire:
So he made truce with those who did despise
The Expiation and the Sacrifice,
That, though detested, Islam's kindred creed
Might crush for him those deadlier enemies;
For fear of God did in his bosom breed
A jealous hate of man, an unreposing need.

XXXV.

"Peace, peace!" he cried. "When we are dead, the day
Of judgment comes, and all shall surely know
Whose God is God, each fearfully shall pay
The errors of his faith in endless woe!
But there is sent a mortal vengeance now
On earth, because an impious race had spurned
Him whom we all adore,—a subtle foe,
By whom for ye this dread reward was earned,
And kingly thrones, which rest on faith, nigh overturned.

XXXVI.

"Think ye, because we weep and kneel and pray,
That God will lull the pestilence? It rose
Even from beneath his throne, where, many a day,
His mercy soothed it to a dark repose:
It walks upon the earth to judge his foes;
And what art thou and I, that he should deign
To curb his ghastly minister, or close
The gates of death ere they receive the twain
Who shook with mortal spells his undefended reign?

XXXVII.

"Ay, there is famine in the gulf of hell,
Its giant worms of fire for ever yawn,—
Their lurid eyes are on us! Those who fell
By the swift shafts of pestilence ere dawn
Are in their jaws! They hunger for the spawn
Of Satan, their own brethren who were sent
To make our souls their spoil. See! see! they fawn
Like dogs, and they will sleep, with luxury spent,
When those detested hearts their iron fangs have rent!

XXXVIII.

"Our God may then lull Pestilence to sleep.—
Pile high the pyre of expiation now,
A forest's spoil of boughs; and on the heap
Pour venomous gums, which sullenly and slow,
When touched by flame, shall burn and melt and flow,
A stream of clinging fire,—and fix on high
A net of iron, and spread forth below
A couch of snakes and scorpions, and the fry
Of centipedes and worms, earth's hellish progeny.

XXXIX.

"Let Laon and Laone on that pyre,
Linked tight with burning brass, perish!—then pray
That, with this sacrifice, the withering ire
Of Heaven may be appeased." He ceased, and they
A space stood silent, as far far away
The echoes of his voice among them died;
And he knelt down upon the dust, alway
Muttering the curses of his speechless pride,
Whilst shame and fear and awe the armies did divide.

XL.

His voice was like a blast that burst the portal
Of fabled hell; and, as he spake, each one
Saw gape beneath the chasms of fire immortal,
And heaven above seemed cloven, where, on a throne
Girt round with storms and shadows, sate alone
Their King and Judge. Fear killed in every breast
All natural pity then, a fear unknown
Before; and, with an inward fire possessed,
They raged like homeless beasts whom burning woods invest.

XLI.

'Twas morn.—At noon the public crier went forth,
Proclaiming through the living and the dead;
"The Monarch saith that his great empire's worth
Is set on Laon and Laone's head.
He who but one yet living here can lead,
Or who the life from both their hearts can wring,
Shall be the kingdom's heir—a glorious meed!
But he who both alive can hither bring
The princess shall espouse, and reign an equal king."

XLII.

Ere night the pyre was piled, the net of iron
Was spread above, the fearful couch below.
It overtopped the towers that did environ
That spacious square, for Fear is never slow
To build the thrones of Hate, her mate and foe;
So she scourged forth the maniac multitude
To rear this pyramid. Tottering and slow,
Plague-stricken, foodless, like lean herds pursued
By gadflies, they have piled the heath and gums and wood.

XLIII.

Night came, a starless and a moonless gloom.
Until the dawn, those hosts of many a nation
Stood round that pile, as near one lover's tomb
Two gentle sisters mourn their desolation:
And in the silence of that expectation
Was heard on high the reptiles' hiss and crawl—
It was so deep—save when the devastation
Of the swift pest, with fearful interval,
Marking its path with shrieks, among the crowd would fall.

XLIV.

Morn came.—Among those sleepless multitudes,
Madness and fear and plague and famine still
Heaped corpse on corpse, as in autumnal woods
The frosts of many a wind with dead leaves fill
Earth's cold and sullen brooks. In silence still
The pale survivors stood. Ere noon, the fear
Of hell became a panic, which did kill,
Like hunger or disease, with whispers drear,
As "Hush! hark! Come they yet? God, God! thine hour [is near!"

XLV.

And priests rushed through their ranks, some counterfeiting
The rage they did inspire, some mad indeed
With their own lies. They said their God was waiting
To see his enemies writhe and burn and bleed,—
And that, till then, the snakes of hell had need
Of human souls.—Three hundred furnaces
Soon blazed through the wide city, where, with speed,
Men brought their infidel kindred to appease [knees.
God's wrath, and, while they burned, knelt round on quivering

XLVI.

The noontide sun was darkened with that smoke,
The winds of eve dispersed those ashes grey.
The madness which these rites had lulled awoke
Again at sunset.—Who shall dare to say
The deeds which night and fear brought forth, or weigh
In balance just the good and evil there?
He might man's deep and searchless heart display,
And cast a light on those dim labyrinths where
Hope near imagined chasms is struggling with Despair.

XLVII.

'Tis said, a mother dragged three children then
To those fierce flames which roast the eyes in the head,
And laughed and died; and that unholy men,
Feasting like fiends upon the infidel dead,
Looked from their meal, and saw an angel tread
The visible floor of heaven, and it was she!
And on that night one without doubt or dread
Came to the fire, and said, "Stop, I am he!
Kill me!"—They burned them both with hellish mockery.

XLVIII.

And one by one, that night, young maidens came,
Beauteous and calm, like shapes of living stone
Clothed in the light of dreams, and by the flame,
Which shrank as overgorged, they laid them down,
And sung a low sweet song, of which alone
One word was heard, and that was Liberty.
And that some kissed their marble feet, with moan
Like love, and died; and then that they did die
With happy smiles, which sunk in white tranquillity.

CANTO XI.

I.

SHE saw me not—she heard me not—alone
Upon the mountain's dizzy brink she stood;
She spake not, breathed not, moved not—there was thrown
Over her look the shadow of a mood
Which only clothes the heart in solitude,
A thought of voiceless death.—She stood alone.
Above, the heavens were spread;—below, the flood
Was murmuring in its caves;—the wind had blown
Her hair apart, through which her eyes and forehead shone.

II.

A cloud was hanging o'er the western mountains;
Before its blue and moveless depth were flying
Grey mists poured forth from the unresting fountains
Of darkness in the north:—the day was dying:—
Sudden, the sun shone forth; its beams were lying
Like boiling gold on ocean, strange to see,
And on the shattered vapours which, defying
The power of light in vain, tossed restlessly
In the red heaven, like wrecks in a tempestuous sea.

III.

It was a stream of living beams, whose bank
On either side by the cloud's cleft was made;
And, where its chasms that flood of glory drank,
Its waves gushed forth like fire, and, as if swayed
By some mute tempest, rolled on her. The shade
Of her bright image floated on the river
Of liquid light, which then did end and fade—
Her radiant shape upon its verge did shiver;
Aloft, her flowing hair like strings of flame did quiver.

IV.

I stood beside her, but she saw me not—
She looked upon the sea, and skies, and earth.
Rapture and love and admiration wrought
A passion deeper far than tears or mirth,
Or speech or gesture, or whate'er has birth
From common joy; which with the speechless feeling
That led her there united, and shot forth
From her far eyes a light of deep revealing,
All but her dearest self from my regard concealing.

V.

Her lips were parted, and the measured breath
Was now heard there;—her dark and intricate eyes,
Orb within orb, deeper than sleep or death,
Absorbed the glories of the burning skies,
Which, mingling with her heart's deep ecstasies,
Burst from her looks and gestures;—and a light
Of liquid tenderness, like love, did rise
From her whole frame,—an atmosphere which quite
Arrayed her in its beams, tremulous and soft and bright.

VI.

She would have clasped me to her glowing frame;
Those warm and odorous lips might soon have shed
On mine the fragrance and the invisible flame
Which now the cold winds stole;—she would have laid
Upon my languid heart her dearest head;
I might have heard her voice, tender and sweet;
Her eyes, mingling with mine, might soon have fed
My soul with their own joy.—One moment yet
I gazed—we parted then, never again to meet!

VII.

Never but once to meet on earth again!
She heard me as I fled—her eager tone
Sank on my heart, and almost wove a chain
Around my will to link it with her own,
So that my stern resolve was almost gone.
"I cannot reach thee! whither dost thou fly?
My steps are faint.—Come back, thou dearest one—
Return, ah me! return!" The wind passed by
On which those accents died, faint, far, and lingeringly.

VIII.

Woe! woe! that moonless midnight!—Want and pest
Were horrible; but one more fell doth rear,
As in a hydra's swarming lair, its crest
Eminent among those victims—even the fear
Of hell: each girt by the hot atmosphere
Of his blind agony, like a scorpion stung
By his own rage upon his burning bier
Of circling coals of fire. But still there clung
One hope, like a keen sword on starting threads uphung:—

IX.

Not death—death was no more refuge or rest;
Not life—it was despair to be!—not sleep,
For fiends and chasms of fire had dispossessed
All natural dreams; to wake was not to weep,
But to gaze, mad and pallid, at the leap
To which the future, like a snaky scourge,
Or like some tyrant's eye, which aye doth keep
Its withering beam upon its slaves, did urge
Their steps:—they heard the roar of hell's sulphureous surge.

X.

Each of that multitude, alone, and lost
To sense of outward things, one hope yet knew;
As on a foam-girt crag some seaman tossed
Stares at the rising tide, or like the crew
Whilst now the ship is splitting through and through;
Each, if the tramp of a far steed was heard,
Started from sick despair, or if there flew
One murmur on the wind, or if some word,
Which none can gather yet, the distant crowd has stirred.

XI.

Why became cheeks, wan with the kiss of death,
Paler from hope? they had sustained despair.
Why watched those myriads with suspended breath,
Sleepless a second night? They are not here,
The victims; and hour by hour, a vision drear,
Warm corpses fall upon the clay-cold dead;
And even in death their lips are writhed with fear.—
The crowd is mute and moveless—overhead
Silent arcturus shines—"Ha! hear'st thou not the tread

XII.

Of rushing feet? laughter? the shout, the scream
Of triumph not to be contained? See! hark!
They come, they come! give way!" Alas, ye deem
Falsely—'tis but a crowd of maniacs stark,
Driven, like a troop of spectres, through the dark
From the choked well, whence a bright death-fire sprung,
A lurid earth-star which dropped many a spark
From its blue train, and, spreading widely, clung
To their wild hair, like mist the topmost pines among.

XIII.

And many, from the crowd collected there,
Joined that strange dance in fearful sympathies;
There was the silence of a long despair
When the last echo of those terrible cries
Came from a distant street, like agonies
Stifled afar.—Before the Tyrant's throne
All night his aged senate sate, their eyes
In stony expectation fixed; when one
Sudden before them stood, a stranger and alone.

XIV.

Dark priests and haughty warriors gazed on him
With baffled wonder, for a hermit's vest
Concealed his face; but, when he spake, his tone,
Ere yet the matter did their thoughts arrest,—
Earnest, benignant, calm, as from a breast
Void of all hate or terror—made them start;
For, as with gentle accents he addressed
His speech to them, on each unwilling heart
Unusual awe did fall—a spirit-quelling dart.

XV.

"Ye princes of the earth, ye sit aghast
Amid the ruin which yourselves have made;
Yes, Desolation heard your trumpet's blast,
And sprang from sleep,—dark Terror has obeyed
Your bidding. Oh that I, whom ye have made
Your foe, could set my dearest enemy free
From pain and fear! but evil casts a shade
Which cannot pass so soon, and Hate must be
The nurse and parent still of an ill progeny.

XVI.

"Ye turn to Heaven for aid in your distress.
Alas! that ye, the mighty and the wise,
Who, if ye dared, might not aspire to less
Than ye conceive of power, should fear the lies
Which thou, and thou, didst frame for mysteries
To blind your slaves.—Consider your own thought.
An empty and a cruel sacrifice
Ye now prepare for a vain idol wrought
Out of the fears and hate which vain desires have brought.

XVII.

"Ye seek for happiness—alas the day!
Ye find it not in luxury, nor in gold,
Nor in the fame, nor in the envied sway,
For which, O willing slaves to Custom old,
Severe task-mistress, ye your hearts have sold.
Ye seek for peace, and, when ye die, to dream
No evil dreams. All mortal things are cold
And senseless then: if aught survive, I deem
It must be love and joy, for they immortal seem.

XVIII.

"Fear not the future, weep not for the past.
Oh! could I win your ears, to dare be now
Glorious, and great, and calm! that ye would cast
Into the dust those symbols of your woe,
Purple, and gold, and steel! that ye would go
Proclaiming to the nations whence ye came
That want and plague and fear from slavery flow;
And that mankind is free, and that the shame
Of royalty and faith is lost in freedom's fame!

XIX.

"If thus, 'tis well: if not, I come to say
That Laon—." While the stranger spoke, among
The council sudden tumult and affray
Arose, for many of those warriors young
Had on his eloquent accents fed and hung
Like bees on mountain flowers: they knew the truth,
And from their thrones in vindication sprung;
The men of faith and law then without ruth
Drew forth their secret steel, and stabbed each ardent youth.

XX.

They stabbed them in the back, and sneered. A slave
Who stood behind the throne those corpses drew
Each to its bloody, dark, and secret grave;
And one more daring raised his steel anew
To pierce the stranger. "What hast thou to do
With me, poor wretch?" Calm, solemn, and severe,
That voice unstrung his sinews, and he threw
His dagger on the ground, and, pale with fear,
Sate silently—his voice then did the stranger rear.

XXI.

"It doth avail not that I weep for ye—
Ye cannot change, since ye are old and grey,
And ye have chosen your lot—your fame must be
A book of blood, whence in a milder day
Men shall learn truth, when ye are wrapped in clay:
Now ye shall triumph. I am Laon's friend,
And him to your revenge will I betray,
So ye concede one easy boon. Attend!
For now I speak of things which ye can apprehend.

XXII.

"There is a people mighty in its youth,
A land beyond the oceans of the west,
Where, though with rudest rites, Freedom and Truth
Are worshiped. From a glorious mother's breast
(Who, since high Athens fell, among the rest
Sate like the Queen of Nations, but in woe,
By inbred monsters outraged and oppressed,
Turns to her chainless child for succour now)
It draws the milk of power in wisdom's fullest flow.

XXIII.

"This land is like an eagle whose young gaze
Feeds on the noontide beam, whose golden plume
Floats moveless on the storm, and in the blaze
Of sunrise gleams when earth is wrapped in gloom;
An epitaph of glory for the tomb
Of murdered Europe may thy fame be made,
Great people! As the sands shalt thou become;
Thy growth is swift as morn when night must fade;
The multitudinous earth shall sleep beneath thy shade.

XXIV.

"Yes, in the desert there is built a home
For Freedom. Genius is made strong to rear
The monuments of man beneath the dome
Of a new heaven; myriads assemble there
Whom the proud lords of man, in rage or fear,
Drive from their wasted homes. The boon I pray
Is this—Laone shall be convoyed there,—
Nay, start not at the name—America:
And then to you this night Laon will I betray.

XXV.

"With me do what ye will. I am your foe!"
The light of such a joy as makes the stare
Of hungry snakes like living emeralds glow
Shone in a hundred human eyes.—"Where, where
Is Laon? Haste! fly! drag him swiftly here!
We grant thy boon."—"I put no trust in ye;
Swear by the Power ye dread."—"We swear, we swear!"
The stranger threw his vest back suddenly,
And smiled in gentle pride, and said "Lo! I am he!"

CANTO XII.

I.

THE transport of a fierce and monstrous gladness
Spread through the multitudinous streets, fast flying
Upon the winds of fear. From his dull madness
The starveling waked, and died in joy; the dying,
Among the corpses in stark agony lying,
Just heard the happy tidings, and in hope
Closed their faint eyes; from house to house replying
With loud acclaim, the living shook heaven's cope,
And filled the startled earth with echoes. Morn did ope

II.

Its pale eyes then; and lo! the long array
Of guards in golden arms, and priests beside,
Singing their bloody hymns, whose garbs betray
The blackness of the faith they seem to hide;
And see the Tyrant's gem-wrought chariot glide
Among the gloomy cowls and glittering spears!
A shape of light is sitting by his side,
A child most beautiful. I' the midst appears
Laon—exempt alone from mortal hopes and fears.

III.

His head and feet are bare, his hands are bound
Behind with heavy chains; yet none do wreak

Their scoffs on him, though myriads throng around.
There are no sneers upon his lip which speak
That scorn or hate has made him bold; his cheek
Resolve has not turned pale; his eyes are mild
And calm, and, like the morn about to break,
Smile on mankind; his heart seems reconciled
To all things and itself, like a reposing child.

IV.

Tumult was in the soul of all beside—
Ill joy, or doubt, or fear; but those who saw
Their tranquil victim pass felt wonder glide
Into their brain, and became calm with awe.—
See, the slow pageant near the pile doth draw.
A thousand torches in the spacious square,
Borne by the ready slaves of ruthless law,
Await the signal round: the morning fair
Is changed to a dim night by that unnatural glare.

V.

And see, beneath a sun-bright canopy,
Upon a platform level with the pile,
The anxious tyrant sit, enthroned on high,
Girt by the chieftains of the host! All smile
In expectation, but one child: the while
I, Laon, led by mutes, ascend my bier
Of fire, and look around. Each distant isle
Is dark in the bright dawn; towers far and near
Pierce like reposing flames the tremulous atmosphere.

VI.

There was such silence through the host as when
An earthquake, trampling on some populous town,
Has crushed ten thousand with one tread, and men
Expect the second. All were mute but one,
That fairest child, who, bold with love, alone
Stood up before the king, without avail
Pleading for Laon's life—her stifled groan
Was heard—she trembled like an aspen pale
Among the gloomy pines of a Norwegian vale.

VII.

What were his thoughts, linked in the morning sun
Among those reptiles, stingless with delay,
Even like a tyrant's wrath?—The signal-gun
Roared—hark, again! In that dread pause he lay
As in a quiet dream. The slaves obey—
A thousand torches drop,—and hark! the last
Bursts on that awful silence. Far away,
Millions, with hearts that beat both loud and fast,
Watch for the springing flame expectant and aghast.

VIII.

They fly—the torches fall—a cry of fear
Has startled the triumphant!—they recede!
For, ere the cannon's roar has died, they hear
The tramp of hoofs like earthquake, and a steed,
Dark and gigantic, with a tempest's speed
Bursts through their ranks: a woman sits thereon,
Fairer, it seems, than aught that earth can breed,—
Calm, radiant, like the phantom of the dawn,
A spirit from the caves of daylight wandering gone.

IX.

All thought it was God's Angel come to sweep
The lingering guilty to their fiery grave;
The tyrant from his throne in dread did leap,—
Her innocence his child from fear did save.
Scared by the faith they feigned, each priestly slave
Knelt for his mercy whom they served with blood;
And, like the refluence of a mighty wave
Sucked into the loud sea, the multitude
With crushing panic fled in terror's altered mood.

X.

They pause, they blush, they gaze; a gathering shout
Bursts like one sound from the ten thousand streams
Of a tempestuous sea. That sudden rout
One checked who never in his mildest dreams
Felt awe from grace or loveliness, the seams
Of his rent heart so hard and cold a creed
Had seared with blistering ice:—but he misdeems
That he is wise whose wounds do only bleed
Inly for self; thus thought the Iberian Priest indeed;—

XI.

And others too thought he was wise to see
In pain and fear and hate something divine;
In love and beauty, no divinity.
Now with a bitter smile, whose light did shine
Like a fiend's hope upon his lips and eyne,
He said, and the persuasion of that sneer
Rallied his trembling comrades—"Is it mine
To stand alone, when kings and soldiers fear
A woman? Heaven has sent its other victim here."

XII.

"Were it not impious," said the King, "to break
Our holy oath?"—"Impious to keep it, say!"
Shrieked the exulting priest. "Slaves, to the stake
Bind her, and on my head the burthen lay
Of her just torments:—at the judgment day
Will I stand up before the golden throne
Of Heaven, and cry, 'To thee I did betray
An infidel! but for me she would have known
Another moment's joy!—the glory be thine own!'"

XIII.

They trembled, but replied not, nor obeyed,
Pausing in breathless silence. Cythna sprung
From her gigantic steed, who, like a shade
Chased by the winds, those vacant streets among
Fled tameless, as the brazen rein she flung
Upon his neck, and kissed his moonèd brow.
A piteous sight, that one so fair and young,
The clasp of such a fearful death should woo
With smiles of tender joy, as beamed from Cythna now!

XIV.

The warm tears burst in spite of faith and fear
From many a tremulous eye, but, like soft dews
Which feed Spring's earliest buds, hung gathered there,
Frozen by doubt. Alas! they could not choose
But weep; for, when her faint limbs did refuse
To climb the pyre, upon the mutes she smiled;
And with her eloquent gestures, and the hues
Of her quick lips—even as a weary child
Wins sleep from some fond nurse with its caresses mild—

XV.

She won them, though unwilling, her to bind
Near me, among the snakes. When they had fled,
One soft reproach that was most thrilling kind
She smiled on me; and nothing then we said,
But each upon the other's countenance fed
Looks of insatiate love. The mighty veil
Which doth divide the living and the dead
Was almost rent, the world grew dim and pale,—
All light in heaven or earth beside our love did fail.

XVI.

Yet—yet—one brief relapse, like the last beam
Of dying flames! The stainless air around
Hung silent and serene. A blood-red gleam
Burst upwards, hurling fiercely from the ground
The globèd smoke; I heard the mighty sound
Of its uprise, like a tempestuous ocean;
And through its chasms I saw as in a swound
The tyrant's child fall without life or motion
Before his throne, subdued by some unseen emotion.—

XVII.

And is this death?—The pyre has disappeared,
The pestilence, the tyrant, and the throng;
The flames grow silent. Slowly there is heard
The music of a breath-suspending song,
Which, like the kiss of love when life is young,
Steeps the faint eyes in darkness sweet and deep;
With ever-changing notes it floats along,
Till on my passive soul there seemed to creep
A melody, like waves on wrinkled sands that leap.

XVIII.

The warm touch of a soft and tremulous hand
Wakened me then; lo! Cythna sate reclined
Beside me, on the waved and golden sand
Of a clear pool, upon a bank o'ertwined
With strange and star-bright flowers which to the wind
Breathed divine odour; high above was spread
The emerald heaven of trees of unknown kind,
Whose moonlike blooms and bright fruit overhead
A shadow which was light upon the waters shed.

XIX.

And round about sloped many a lawny mountain,
With incense-bearing forests, and vast caves
Of marble radiance, to that mighty fountain;
And, where the flood its own bright margin laves,
Their echoes talk with its eternal waves,
Which from the depths whose jagged caverns breed
Their unreposing strife it lifts and heaves,—
Till through a chasm of hills they roll, and feed
A river deep, which flies with smooth but arrowy speed.

XX.

As we sate gazing in a trance of wonder,
A boat approached, borne by the musical air
Along the waves which sung and sparkled under
Its rapid keel. A winged shape sate there;
A child with silver-shining wings, so fair
That, as her bark did through the waters glide,
The shadow of the lingering waves did wear
Light, as from starry beams; from side to side,
While veering to the wind, her plumes the bark did guide.

XXI.

The boat was one curved shell of hollow pearl,
Almost translucent with the light divine
Of her within; the prow and stern did curl,
Horned on high, like the young moon supine,
When o'er dim twilight mountains dark with pine
It floats upon the sunset's sea of beams,
Whose golden waves in many a purple line
Fade fast, till, borne on sunlight's ebbing streams,
Dilating, on earth's verge the sunken meteor gleams.

XXII.

Its keel has struck the sands beside our feet.—
Then Cythna turned to me, and from her eyes,
Which swam with unshed tears, a look more sweet
Than happy love, a wild and glad surprise,
Glanced as she spake: "Ay, this is paradise,
And not a dream, and we are all united!
Lo! that is mine own child, who, in the guise
Of madness, came like day to one benighted
In lonesome woods. My heart is now too well requited!"

XXIII.

And then she wept aloud, and in her arms
Clasped that bright shape, less marvellously fair
Than her own human hues and living charms;
Which, as she leaned in passion's silence there,
Breathed warmth on the cold bosom of the air,
Which seemed to blush and tremble with delight;
The glossy darkness of her streaming hair
Fell o'er that snowy child, and wrapped from sight
The fond and long embrace which did their hearts unite.

XXIV.

Then the bright child, the plumèd seraph, came,
And fixed its blue and beaming eyes on mine,
And said: "I was disturbed by tremulous shame
When once we met,—yet knew that I was thine,
From the same hour in which thy lips divine
Kindled a clinging dream within my brain,
Which ever waked when I might sleep, to twine
Thine image with *her* memory dear. Again
We meet; exempted now from mortal fear or pain.

XXV.

"When the consuming flames had wrapped ye round,
The hope which I had cherished went away;
I fell in agony on the senseless ground,
And hid mine eyes in dust; and far astray
My mind was gone, when, bright like dawning day,
The Spectre of the Plague before me flew,
And breathed upon my lips, and seemed to say,
'They wait for thee, belovèd!'—then I knew
The death-mark on my breast, and became calm anew.

XXVI.

"It was the calm of love—for I was dying.
I saw the black and half-extinguished pyre
In its own grey and shrunken ashes lying;
The pitchy smoke of the departed fire
Still hung in many a hollow dome and spire
Above the towers, like night; beneath whose shade,
Awed by the ending of their own desire,
The armies stood; a vacancy was made
In expectation's depth, and so they stood dismayed.

XXVII.

"The frightful silence of that altered mood
The tortures of the dying clove alone,
Till one uprose among the multitude,
And said: 'The flood of time is rolling on;
We stand upon its brink, whilst *they* are gone
To glide in peace down death's mysterious stream.
Have ye done well? They moulder, flesh and bone,
Who might have made this life's envenomed dream
A sweeter draught than ye will ever taste, I deem.

XXVIII.

"'These perish as the good and great of yore
Have perished, and their murderers will repent.
Yes, vain and barren tears shall flow before
Yon smoke has faded from the firmament,—
Even for this cause, that ye, who must lament
The death of those that made this world so fair,
Cannot recall them now; but then is lent
To man the wisdom of a high despair
When such can die, and he live on and linger here.

XXIX.

"'Ay, ye may fear—not now the pestilence,
From fabled hell as by a charm withdrawn,—
All power and faith must pass, since calmly hence
In pain and fire have unbelievers gone;
And ye must sadly turn away, and moan
In secret, to his home each one returning;
And to long ages shall this hour be known;
And slowly shall its memory, ever burning,
Fill this dark night of things with an eternal morning.

XXX.

"'For me the world is grown too void and cold,
Since Hope pursues immortal destiny
With steps thus slow—therefore shall ye behold
How atheists and republicans can die;
Tell to your children this!' Then suddenly
He sheathed a dagger in his heart, and fell;
My brain grew dark in death, and yet to me
There came a murmur from the crowd to tell
Of deep and mighty change which suddenly befell.

XXXI.

"Then suddenly I stood, a winged thought,
Before the immortal senate, and the seat
Of that star-shining Spirit, whence is wrought
The strength of its dominion,—good and great,
The Better Genius of this world's estate.
His realm around one mighty fane is spread,
Elysian islands bright and fortunate,
Calm dwellings of the free and happy dead,
Where I am sent to lead." These winged words she said,

XXXII.

And with the silence of her eloquent smile
Bade us embark in her divine canoe.
Then at the helm we took our seat, the while
Above her head those plumes of dazzling hue
Into the wind's invisible stream she threw,
Sitting beside the prow: like gossamer,
On the swift breath of morn, the vessel flew
O'er the bright whirlpools of that fountain fair,
Whose shores receded fast while we seemed lingering there.

XXXIII.

Till down that mighty stream, dark, calm, and fleet,
Between a chasm of cedarn mountains riven,
Chased by the thronging winds whose viewless feet,
As swift as twinkling beams, had under heaven
From woods and waves wild sounds and odours driven,
The boat flew visibly. Three nights and days,
Borne like a cloud through morn and noon and even,
We sailed along the winding watery ways
Of the vast stream, a long and labyrinthine maze.

XXXIV.

A scene of joy and wonder to behold—
That river's shapes and shadows changing ever!
Where the broad sunrise filled with deepening gold
Its whirlpools where all hues did spread and quiver,
And where melodious falls did burst and shiver
Among rocks clad with flowers, the foam and spray
Sparkled like stars upon the sunny river;
Or, when the moonlight poured a holier day,
One vast and glittering lake around green islands lay.

XXXV.

Morn, noon, and even, that boat of pearl outran
The streams which bore it, like the arrowy cloud
Of tempest, or the speedier thought of man
Which flieth forth and cannot make abode.
Sometimes through forests, deep like night, we glode,
Between the walls of mighty mountains crowned
With cyclopean piles, whose turrets proud,
The homes of the departed, dimly frowned
O'er the bright waves which girt their dark foundations round.

XXXVI.

Sometimes between the wide and flowering meadows
Mile after mile we sailed, and 'twas delight
To see far off the sunbeams chase the shadows
Over the grass; sometimes beneath the night
Of wide and vaulted caves whose roofs were bright
With starry gems we fled, whilst from their deep
And dark-green chasms shades beautiful and white
Amid sweet sounds across our path would sweep,
Like swift and lovely dreams that walk the waves of sleep.

XXXVII.

And ever as we sailed our minds were full
Of love and wisdom, which would overflow
In converse wild and sweet and wonderful,
And in quick smiles whose light would come and go
Like music o'er wide waves, and in the flow
Of sudden tears, and in the mute caress—
For a deep shade was cleft, and we did know
That virtue, though obscured on earth, not less
Survives all mortal change in lasting loveliness.

XXXVIII.

Three days and nights we sailed, as thought and feeling
Number delightful hours—for through the sky
The spherèd lamps of day and night, revealing
New changes and new glories, rolled on high,—
Sun, moon, and moonlike lamps, the progeny
Of a diviner heaven, serene and fair.
On the fourth day, wild as a wind-wrought sea
The stream became, and fast and faster bare
The spirit-wingèd boat, steadily speeding there.

XXXIX.

Steady and swift,—where the waves rolled like mountains
Within the vast ravine whose rifts did pour
Tumultuous floods from their ten thousand fountains,
The thunder of whose earth-uplifting roar
Made the air sweep in whirlwinds from the shore,—
Calm as a shade, the boat of that fair child
Securely fled that rapid stress before,
Amid the topmost spray, and sunbows wild
Wreathed in the silver mist. In joy and pride we smiled.

XL.

The torrent of that wide and raging river
Is passed, and our aërial speed suspended.
We look behind; a golden mist did quiver
Where its wild surges with the lake were blended,—
(Our bark hung there—as on a line, suspended
Between two heavens)—that windless waveless lake
Which four great cataracts from four vales, attended
By mists, aye feed: from rocks and clouds they break,
And of that azure sea a silent refuge make.

XLI.

Motionless resting on the lake awhile,
I saw its marge of snow-bright mountains rear
Their peaks aloft; I saw each radiant isle;
And in the midst, afar, even like a sphere
Hung in one hollow sky, did there appear
The Temple of the Spirit. On the sound
Which issued thence drawn nearer and more near,
Like the swift moon this glorious earth around,
The charmèd boat approached, and there its haven found.

NOTE ON THE REVOLT OF ISLAM, BY MRS SHELLEY.

SHELLEY possessed two remarkable qualities of intellect—a brilliant imagination, and a logical exactness of reason. His inclinations led him (he fancied) almost alike to poetry and metaphysical discussions. I say "he fancied," because I believe the former to have been paramount, and that it would have gained the mastery even had he struggled against it. However, he said that he deliberated at one time whether he should dedicate himself to poetry or metaphysics; and, resolving on the former,

he educated himself for it, discarding in a great measure his philosophical pursuits, and engaging himself in the study of the poets of Greece, Italy, and England. To these may be added a constant perusal of portions of the Old Testament—the Psalms, the book of Job, the Prophet Isaiah, and others, the sublime poetry of which filled him with delight.

As a poet, his intellect and compositions were powerfully influenced by exterior circumstances, and especially by his place of abode.* He was very fond of travelling, and ill-health increased this restlessness. The sufferings occasioned by a cold English winter made him pine, especially when our colder Spring arrived, for a more genial climate. In 1816 he again visited Switzerland, and rented a house on the banks of the lake of Geneva; and many a day, in cloud or sunshine, was passed alone in his boat—sailing as the wind listed, or weltering on the calm waters. The majestic aspect of nature ministered such thoughts as he afterwards enwove in verse. His lines on the Bridge of the Arve, and his *Hymn to Intellectual Beauty*, were written at this time. Perhaps during this summer his genius was checked by association with another poet whose nature was utterly dissimilar to his own, yet who, in the poem he wrote at that time, gave tokens that he shared for a period the more abstract and etherialized inspiration of Shelley. The saddest events awaited his return to England. But such was his fear to wound the feelings of others that he never expressed the anguish he felt, and seldom gave vent to the indignation roused by the persecutions he underwent; while the course of deep unexpressed passion, and the sense of injury, engendered the desire to embody themselves in forms defecated of all the weakness and evil which cling to real life.

He chose therefore for his hero a youth nourished in dreams of liberty, some of whose actions are in direct opposition to the opinions of the world; but who is animated throughout by an ardent love of virtue, and a resolution to confer the boons of political and intellectual freedom on his fellow-creatures. He created for this youth a woman such as he delighted to imagine—full of enthusiasm for the same objects; and they both, with will unvanquished, and the deepest sense of the justice of their cause, met adversity and death. There exists in this poem a memorial of a friend of his youth. The character of the old man who liberates Laon from his tower-prison, and tends on him in sickness, is founded on that of Doctor Lind, who, when Shelley was at Eton, had often stood by to befriend and support him, and whose name he never mentioned without love and veneration.

During the year 1817 we were established at Marlow in Buckinghamshire. Shelley's choice of abode was fixed chiefly by this town being at no great distance from London, and its neighbourhood to the Thames. The poem was written in his boat, as it floated under the beech-groves of Bisham, or during wanderings in the neighbouring country, which is distinguished for peculiar beauty. The chalk hills break into cliffs that overhang the Thames, or form valleys clothed with beech; the wilder portion of the country is rendered beautiful by exuberant vegetation; and the cultivated part is peculiarly fertile. With all this wealth of nature which, either in the form of gentlemen's parks or soil dedicated to agriculture, flourishes around, Marlow was inhabited (I hope it is altered now) by a very poor population. The women are lacemakers, and lose their health by sedentary labour, for which they were very ill paid. The poor-laws ground to the dust not only the paupers, but those who had risen just above that state, and were obliged to pay poor-rates. The changes produced by peace following a long war, and a bad harvest, brought with them the most heart-rending evils to the poor. Shelley afforded what alleviation he could. In the winter, while bringing out his poem, he had a severe attack of ophthalmia, caught while visiting the poor cottages. I mention these things—for this minute and active sympathy with his fellow-creatures gives a thousandfold interest to his speculations, and stamps with reality his pleadings for the human race.

The poem, bold in its opinions and uncompromising in their expression, met with

many censurers, not only among those who allow of no virtue but such as supports the cause they espouse, but even among those whose opinions were similar to his own. I extract a portion of a letter written in answer to one of these friends. It best details the impulses of Shelley's mind, and his motives: it was written with entire unreserve; and is therefore a precious monument of his own opinion of his powers, of the purity of his designs, and the ardour with which he clung, in adversity and through the valley of the shadow of death, to views from which he believed the permanent happiness of mankind must eventually spring.

"*Marlow, Dec.* 11, 1817.

"I have read and considered all that you say about my general powers, and the particular instance of the poem in which I have attempted to develop them. Nothing can be more satisfactory to me than the interest which your admonitions express. But I think you are mistaken in some points with regard to the peculiar nature of my powers, whatever be their amount. I listened with deference and self-suspicion to your censures of *Laon and Cythna;* but the productions of mine which you commend hold a very low place in my own esteem; and this reassured me, in some degree at least. The poem was produced by a series of thoughts which filled my mind with unbounded and sustained enthusiasm. I felt the precariousness of my life, and I engaged in this task, resolved to leave some record of myself. Much of what the volume contains was written with the same feeling—as real, though not so prophetic—as the communications of a dying man. I never presumed indeed to consider it anything approaching to faultless; but, when I consider contemporary productions of the same apparent pretensions, I own I was filled with confidence. I felt that it was in many respects a genuine picture of my own mind. I felt that the sentiments were true, not assumed. And in this have I long believed that my power consists; in sympathy, and that part of the imagination which relates to sentiment and contemplation. I am formed, if for anything not in common with the herd of mankind, to apprehend minute and remote distinctions of feeling, whether relative to external nature or the living beings which surround us, and to communicate the conceptions which result from considering either the moral or the material universe as a whole. Of course, I believe these faculties, which perhaps comprehend all that is sublime in man, to exist very imperfectly in my own mind. But, when you advert to my Chancery-paper (a cold, forced, unimpassioned, insignificant piece of cramped and cautious argument), and to the little scrap about *Mandeville*, (which expressed my feelings indeed, but cost scarcely two minutes' thought to express), as specimens of my powers more favourable than that which grew as it were from the agony and bloody sweat of intellectual travail; surely I must feel that, in some manner, either I am mistaken in believing that I have any talent at all, or you in the selection of the specimens of it. Yet after all I cannot but be conscious, in much of what I write, of an absence of that tranquillity which is the attribute and accompaniment of power. This feeling alone would make your most kind and wise admonitions, on the subject of the economy of intellectual force, valuable to me. And, if I live, or if I see any trust in coming years, doubt not but that I shall do something, whatever it may be, which a serious and earnest estimate of my powers will suggest to me, and which will be in every respect accommodated to their utmost limits."

ROSALIND AND HELEN,

A MODERN ECLOGUE.

ADVERTISEMENT TO ROSALIND AND HELEN, &c.

NAPLES, *Dec.* 20, 1818.

THE story of *Rosalind and Helen* is undoubtedly not an attempt in the highest style of poetry. It is in no degree calculated to excite profound meditation; and, if, by interesting the affections and amusing the imagination, it awaken a certain ideal melancholy favourable to the reception of more important impressions, it will produce in the reader all that the writer experienced in the composition. I resigned myself, as I wrote, to the impulse of the feelings which moulded the conception of the story: and this impulse determined the pauses of a measure which only *pretends* to be regular, inasmuch as it corresponds with and expresses the irregularity of the imaginations which inspire it.

I do not know which of the few scattered poems I left in England will be selected by my bookseller to add to this collection. One, which I sent from Italy, was written after a day's excursion among those lovely mountains which surround what was once the retreat, and where is now the sepulchre, of Petrarch. If any one is inclined to condemn the insertion of the introductory lines, which image forth the sudden relief of a state of deep despondency by the radiant visions disclosed by the sudden burst of an Italian sunrise in autumn, on the highest peak of those delightful mountains, I can only offer as my excuse that they were not erased at the request of a dear friend with whom added years of intercourse only add to my apprehension of its value, and who would have had more right than any one to complain that she has not been able to extinguish in me the very power of delineating sadness.

SCENE.—*The Shore of the Lake of Como.*

ROSALIND, HELEN, *and her Child.*

HELEN.

COME hither, my sweet Rosalind.
'Tis long since thou and I have met:
And yet methinks it were unkind
Those moments to forget.
Come, sit by me. I see thee stand
By this lone lake, in this far land,
Thy loose hair in the light wind flying,
Thy sweet voice to each tone of even
United, and thine eyes replying
To the hues of yon fair heaven.
Come, gentle friend: wilt sit by me,
And be as thou wert wont to be

Ere we were disunited?
None doth behold us now: the power
That led us forth at this lone hour
Will be but ill requited
If thou depart in scorn: oh! come
And talk of our abandoned home.
Remember, this is Italy,
And we are exiles. Talk with me
Of that our land, whose wilds and floods,
Barren and dark although they be,
Were dearer than these chesnut woods;
Those heathy paths, that inland stream,
And the blue mountains, shapes which seem
Like wrecks of childhood's sunny dream:
Which that we have abandoned now
Weighs on the heart like that remorse
Which altered friendship leaves. I seek
No more our youthful intercourse:
That cannot be. Rosalind, speak,
Speak to me! Leave me not!—When morn did come,
When evening fell upon our common home,
When for one hour we parted—Do not frown;
I would not chide thee, though thy faith is broken.
But turn to me. Oh! by this cherished token
Of woven hair, which thou wilt not disown,
Turn, as 'twere but the memory of me,
And not my scornèd self, who prayed to thee.

ROSALIND.

Is it a dream, or do I see
And hear frail Helen? I would flee
Thy tainting touch; but former years
Arise, and bring forbidden tears;
And my o'erburthened memory
Seeks yet its lost repose in thee.
I share thy crime. I cannot choose
But weep for thee; mine own strange grief
But seldom stoops to such relief:
Nor ever did I love thee less,
Though mourning o'er thy wickedness
Even with a sister's woe. I knew
What to the evil world is due,
And therefore sternly did refuse

To link me with the infamy
Of one so lost as Helen. Now,
Bewildered by my dire despair,
Wondering I blush and weep that thou
Shouldst love me still—thou only!—There,
Let us sit on that grey stone,
Till our mournful talk be done.

HELEN.

Alas! not there; I cannot bear
The murmur of this lake to hear.
A sound from there, Rosalind dear,
Which never yet I heard elsewhere
But in our native land, recurs,
Even here where now we meet. It stirs
Too much of suffocating sorrow!
In the dell of yon dark chesnut wood
Is a stone seat, a solitude
Less like our own:—The ghost of Peace
Will not desert this spot. To-morrow,
If thy kind feelings should not cease,
We may sit here.

ROSALIND.

Thou lead, my sweet,
And I will follow.

HENRY.

'Tis Fenici's seat
Where you are going?—This is not the way,
Mamma; it leads behind those trees that grow
Close to the little river.

HELEN.

Yes, I know;
I was bewildered. Kiss me and be gay,
Dear boy; why do you sob?

HENRY.

I do not know:
But it might break any one's heart to see
You and the lady cry so bitterly.

HELEN.

It is a gentle child, my friend. Go home,
Henry, and play with Lilla till I come.
We only cried with joy to see each other;
We are quite merry now.—Good night.

The boy
Lifted a sudden look upon his mother;
And, in the gleam of forced and hollow joy
Which lightened o'er her face, laughed with the glee
Of light and unsuspecting infancy,
And whispered in her ear, "Bring home with you
That sweet strange lady-friend." Then off he flew;
But stopped, and beckoned with a meaning smile,
Where the road turned. Pale Rosalind the while,
Hiding her face, stood weeping silently.

In silence then they took the way
Beneath the forest's solitude.
It was a vast and antique wood
Through which they took their way;
And the gray shades of evening
O'er that green wilderness did fling
Still deeper solitude.
Pursuing still the path that wound
The vast and knotted trees around,
Through which slow shades were wandering,
To a deep lawny dell they came,
To a stone seat beside a spring;
O'er which the columned wood did frame
A roofless temple, like the fane
Where, ere new creeds could faith obtain,
Man's early race once knelt beneath
The overhanging deity.
O'er this fair fountain hung the sky,
Now spangled with rare stars. The snake,
The pale snake, that with eager breath
Creeps here his noontide thirst to slake,
Is beaming with many a mingled hue
Shed from yon dome's eternal blue,
When he floats on that dark and lucid flood
In the light of his own loveliness;
And the birds that in the fountain dip
Their plumes, with fearless fellowship,
Above and round him wheel and hover.
The fitful wind is heard to stir
One solitary leaf on high;
The chirping of the grasshopper

Fills every pause. There is emotion
In all that dwells at noontide here:
Then through the intricate wild wood
A maze of life and light and motion
Is woven. But there is stillness now;
Gloom, and the trance of Nature now.
The snake is in his cave asleep;
The birds are on the branches dreaming:
Only the shadows creep;
Only the glow-worm is gleaming;
Only the owls and the nightingales
Wake in this dell when daylight fails,
And grey shades gather in the woods;—
And the owls have all fled far away
In a merrier glen to hoot and play,
For the moon is veiled and sleeping now.
The accustomed nightingale still broods
On her accustomed bough;
But she is mute, for her false mate
Has fled and left her desolate.

This silent spot tradition old
Had peopled with the spectral dead.
For the roots of the speaker's hair felt cold
And stiff, as with tremulous lips he told
That a hellish shape at midnight led
The ghost of a youth with hoary hair,
And sate on the seat beside him there,
Till a naked child came wandering by,
When the fiend would change to a lady fair.
A fearful tale! The truth was worse:
For here a sister and a brother
Had solemnized a monstrous curse,
Meeting in this fair solitude:
For beneath yon very sky
Had they resigned to one another
Body and soul. The multitude,
Tracking them to the secret wood,
Tore limb from limb their innocent child,
And stabbed and trampled on its mother;
But the youth, for God's most holy grace,
A priest saved to burn in the market-place.

Duly at evening Helen came
To this lone silent spot,
From the wrecks of a tale of wilder sorrow
So much of sympathy to borrow
As soothed her own dark lot.
Duly each evening from her home
With her fair child would Helen come
To sit upon that antique seat,
While the hues of day were pale.
And the bright boy beside her feet
Now lay, lifting at intervals
His broad blue eyes on her;
Now where some sudden impulse calls
Followed. He was a gentle boy,
And in all gentle sports took joy.
Oft in a dry leaf for a boat,
With a small feather for a sail,
His fancy on that spring would float,
If some invisible breeze might stir
Its marble calm. And Helen smiled
Through tears of awe on the gay child,
To think that a boy as fair as he,
In years which never more may be,
By that same fount, in that same wood,
The like sweet fancies had pursued;
And that a mother, lost like her,
Had mournfully sate watching him.
Then all the scene was wont to swim
Through the mist of a burning tear.

For many months had Helen known
This scene; and now she thither turned
Her footsteps, not alone.
The friend whose falsehood she had mourned
Sate with her on that seat of stone.
Silent they sate; for evening,
And the power its glimpses bring,
Had with one awful shadow quelled
The passion of their grief. They sate
With linked hands, for unrepelled
Had Helen taken Rosalind's.
Like the autumn wind when it unbinds

The tangled locks of the nightshade's hair
Which is twined in the sultry summer air
Round the walls of an outworn sepulchre
Did the voice of Helen, sad and sweet,
And the sound of her heart that ever beat
As with sighs and words she breathed on her,
Unbind the knots of her friend's despair,
Till her thoughts were free to float and flow;
And from her labouring bosom now,
Like the bursting of a prisoned flame,
The voice of a long-pent sorrow came.

ROSALIND.

I saw the dark earth fall upon
The coffin; and I saw the stone
Laid over him whom this cold breast
Had pillowed to his nightly rest.
Thou knowest not, thou canst not know,
My agony. Oh! I could not weep:
The sources whence such blessings flow,
Were not to be approached by me!
But I could smile, and I could sleep,
Though with a self-accusing heart.
In morning's light, in evening's gloom,
I watched—and would not thence depart—
My husband's unlamented tomb.
My children knew their sire was gone;
But, when I told them "he is dead,"
They laughed aloud in frantic glee,
They clapped their hands and leaped about,
Answering each other's ecstasy
With many a prank and merry shout;
But I sat silent and alone,
Wrapped in the mock of mourning weed.

They laughed, for he was dead; but I
Sate with a hard and tearless eye,
And with a heart which would deny
The secret joy it could not quell,
Low muttering o'er his loathèd name;
Till from that self-contention came
Remorse where sin was none—a hell
Which in pure spirits should not dwell.

I'll tell thee truth. He was a man
  Hard, selfish, loving only gold,
Yet full of guile: his pale eyes ran
  With tears which each some falsehood told,
And oft his smooth and bridled tongue
  Would give the lie to his flushing cheek.
He was a coward to the strong;
  He was a tyrant to the weak,
  On whom his vengeance he would wreak:
For scorn, whose arrows search the heart,
From many a stranger's eye would dart,
And on his memory cling, and follow
His soul to its home so cold and hollow.
  He was a tyrant to the weak,
And we were such, alas the day!
Oft, when my little ones at play
Were in youth's natural lightness gay,
Or if they listened to some tale
  Of travellers, or of fairyland,
  When the light from the woodfire's dying brand
  Flashed on their faces,—if they heard,
    Or thought they heard, upon the stair
  His footstep, the suspended word
Died on my lips. We all grew pale;
    The babe at my bosom was hushed with fear
    If it thought it heard its father near;
And my two wild boys would near my knee
Cling, cowed and cowering fearfully.

I'll tell thee truth: I loved another.
  His name in my ear was ever ringing,
  His form to my brain was ever clinging;
  Yet, if some stranger breathed that name,
    My lips turned white, and my heart beat fast.
  My nights were once haunted by dreams of flame,
    My days were dim in the shadow cast
  By the memory of the same.
  Day and night, day and night,
  He was my breath and life and light,
    For three short years which soon were past.
In the fourth, my gentle mother
Led me to the shrine, to be

His sworn bride eternally.
And now we stood on the altar stair,
When my father came from a distant land,
And with a loud and fearful cry
Rushed between us suddenly.
I saw the stream of his thin grey hair,
I saw his lean and lifted hand,
And heard his words—and live! O God!
Wherefore do I live?—"Hold, hold!"
He cried, "I tell thee 'tis her brother!
Thy mother, boy, beneath the sod
Of yon churchyard rests in her shroud so cold.
I am now weak and pale and old:
We were once dear to one another,
I and that corpse. Thou art our child!"
Then with a laugh both long and wild
The youth upon the pavement fell:
They found him dead! All looked on me,
The spasms of my despair to see;
But I was calm. I went away;
I was clammy-cold like clay.
I did not weep—I did not speak;
But day by day, week after week,
I walked about like a corpse alive.
Alas! sweet friend, you must believe
This heart is stone—it did not break.

My father lived a little while;
But all might see that he was dying,
He smiled with such a woful smile.
When he was in the churchyard lying
Among the worms, we grew quite poor,
So that no one would give us bread;
My mother looked at me, and said
Faint words of cheer, which only meant
That she could die and be content;
So I went forth from the same church door
To another husband's bed.
And this was he who died at last,
When weeks and months and years had passed,
Through which I firmly did fulfil
My duties, a devoted wife,
With the stern step of vanquished will

Walking beneath the night of life,
Whose hours extinguished, like slow rain
Falling for ever, pain by pain,
The very hope of death's dear rest;
Which, since the heart within my breast
Of natural life was dispossessed,
Its strange sustainer there had been.

When flowers were dead, and grass was green
Upon my mother's grave—that mother
Whom to outlive, and cheer, and make
My wan eyes glitter for her sake,
Was my vowed task, the single care
Which once gave life to my despair—
When she was a thing that did not stir,
And the crawling worms were cradling her
To a sleep more deep and so more sweet
Than a baby's rocked on its nurse's knee,
I lived; a living pulse then beat
Beneath my heart, that awakened me.
What was this pulse so warm and free?
Alas! I knew it could not be.
My own dull blood. 'Twas like a thought
Of liquid love, that spread and wrought
Under my bosom and in my brain,
And crept with the blood through every vein;
And hour by hour, day after day,
The wonder could not charm away,
But laid in sleep my wakeful pain,—
Until I knew it was a child,
And then I wept. For long long years
These frozen eyes had shed no tears:
But now—'Twas the season fair and mild
When April has wept itself to May:
I sate through the sweet sunny day
By my window bowered round with leaves,
And down my cheeks the quick tears fell
Like twinkling rain-drops from the eaves
When warm Spring showers are passing o'er.
O Helen, none can ever tell
The joy it was to weep once more!

I wept to think how hard it were

To kill my babe, and take from it
The sense of light, and the warm air,
And my own fond and tender care,
And love, and smiles; ere I knew yet
That these for it might, as for me,
Be the masks of a grinning mockery.
And haply, I would dream, 'twere sweet
To feed it from my faded breast,
Or mark my own heart's restless beat
Rock it to its untroubled rest;
And watch the growing soul beneath
Dawn in faint smiles; and hear its breath,
Half interrupted by calm sighs;
And search the depth of its fair eyes
For long-departed memories.
And so I lived till that sweet load
Was lightened. Darkly forward flowed
The stream of years, and on it bore
Two shapes of gladness to my sight;
Two other babes, delightful more,
In my lost soul's abandoned night,
Than their own country ships may be
Sailing towards wrecked mariners
Who cling to the rock of a wintry sea.
For each, as it came, brought soothing tears;
And a loosening warmth, as each one lay
Sucking the sullen milk away,
About my frozen heart did play,
And weaned it, oh how painfully!
(As they themselves were weaned each one
From that sweet food)—even from the thirst
Of death and nothingness and rest;
Strange inmate of a living breast;
Which all that I had undergone
Of grief and shame, since she who first
The gates of that dark refuge closed
Came to my sight, and almost burst
The seal of that Lethean spring. . . .
But these fair shadows interposed:
For all delights are shadows now!
And from my brain to my dull brow
The heavy tears gather and flow:
I cannot speak—Oh let me weep!

The tears which fell from her wan eyes
Glimmered among the moonlight dew:
Her deep hard sobs and heavy sighs
Their echoes in the darkness threw.
When she grew calm, she thus did keep
The tenor of her tale:—

"He died,
I know not how. He was not old,
If age be numbered by its years:
But he was bowed and bent with fears,
Pale with the quenchless thirst of gold,
Which, like fierce fever, left him weak;
And his strait lip and bloated cheek
Were warped in spasms by hollow sneers;
And selfish cares with barren plough,
Not age, had lined his narrow brow,
And foul and cruel thoughts, which feed
Upon the withering life within,
Like vipers on some poisonous weed.
Whether his ill were death or sin
None knew, until he died indeed,
And then men owned they were the same.

"Seven days within my chamber lay
That corse, and my babes made holiday.
At last, I told them what is death.
The eldest, with a kind of shame,
Came to my knees with silent breath,
And sate awe-stricken at my feet;
And soon the others left their play,
And sate there too. It is unmeet
To shed on the brief flower of youth
The withering knowledge of the grave.
From me remorse then wrung that truth:
I could not bear the joy which gave
Too just a response to mine own.
In vain,—I dared not feign a groan;
And in their artless looks I saw,
Between the mists of fear and awe,
That my own thought was theirs; and they
Expressed it not in words, but said
Each in its heart how every day

Will pass in happy work and play,
Now *he* is dead and gone away.

"After the funeral all our kin
Assembled, and the will was read.
My friend, I tell thee, even the dead
Have strength, their putrid shrouds within,
To blast and torture. Those who live
Still fear the living; but a corse
Is merciless, and Power doth give
To such pale tyrants half the spoil
He rends from those who groan and toil,
Because they blush not with remorse
Among their crawling worms. Behold,
I have no child! My tale grows old
With grief, and staggers: let it reach
The limits of my feeble speech,
And languidly at length recline
On the brink of its own grave and mine.

"Thou know'st what a thing is poverty
Among the fallen on evil days.
'Tis crime, and fear, and infamy,
And houseless want in frozen ways
Wandering ungarmented, and pain,
And, worse than all, that inward stain,
Foul self-contempt, which drowns in sneers
Youth's starlight smile, and makes its tears
First like hot gall, then dry for ever.
And well thou know'st a mother never
Could doom her children to this ill,—
And well he knew the same. The will
Imported that, if e'er again
I sought my children to behold,
Or in my birthplace did remain
Beyond three days, whose hours were told,
They should inherit nought. And he
To whom next came their patrimony—
A sallow lawyer, cruel and cold—
Aye watched me, as the will was read,
With eyes askance, which sought to see
The secrets of my agony;
And, with close lips and anxious brow,

Stood canvassing still to and fro
The chance of my resolve, and all
The dead man's caution just did call;
For in that killing lie 'twas said—
'She is adulterous, and doth hold
In secret that the Christian creed
Is false, and therefore is much need
That I should have a care to save
My children from eternal fire.'
Friend, he was sheltered by the grave,
And therefore dared to be a liar!
In truth, the Indian on the pyre
Of her dead husband, half-consumed,
As well might there be false as I
To those abhorred embraces doomed,
Far worse than fire's brief agony.
As to the Christian creed, if true
Or false, I never questioned it:
I took it as the vulgar do:
Nor my vexed soul had leisure yet
To doubt the things men say, or deem
That they are other than they seem.

"All present who those crimes did hear,
In feigned or actual scorn and fear—
Men, women, children—slunk away,
Whispering with self-contented pride
Which half suspects its own base lie.
I spoke to none, nor did abide,
But silently I went my way;
Nor noticed I where joyously
Sate my two younger babes at play,
In the courtyard through which I passed;
But went with footsteps firm and fast,
Till I came to the brink of the ocean green.
And there a woman with grey hairs,
Who had my mother's servant been,
Kneeling, with many tears and prayers,
Made me accept a purse of gold—
Half of the earnings she had kept
To refuge her when weak and old.

"With woe which never sleeps or slept,

I wander now.—'Tis a vain thought:
But on yon Alp whose snowy head
'Mid the azure air is islanded
(We see it—o'er the flood of cloud
Which sunrise from its eastern caves
Drives, wrinkling into golden waves,
Hung with its precipices proud—
From that grey stone where first we met)—
There—(now who knows the dead feel nought?)—
Should be my grave; for he who yet
Is my soul's soul once said: "Twere sweet
'Mid stars and lightnings to abide,
And winds, and lulling snows that beat
With their soft flakes the mountain wide,
When weary meteor lamps repose,
And languid storms their pinions close:
And all things strong and bright and pure,
And ever during, aye endure.
Who knows, if one were buried there,
But these things might our spirits make,
Amid the all-surrounding air,
Their own eternity partake?'
Then 'twas a wild and and playful saying,
At which I laughed, or seemed to laugh.
They were his words: now heed my praying,
And let them be my epitaph;
Thy memory for a term may be
My monument. Wilt remember me?
I know thou wilt; and canst forgive,
Whilst in this erring world to live
My soul disdained not, that I thought
Its lying forms were worthy aught,
And much less thee."

HELEN.

Oh speak not so!
But come to me, and pour thy woe
Into this heart, full though it be—
Ay, overflowing—with its own.
I thought that grief had severed me
From all beside who weep and groan,
Its likeness upon earth to be—
Its express image; but thou art

More wretched. Sweet, we will not part
Henceforth, if death be not division;
If so, the dead feel no contrition.
But wilt thou hear, since last we parted,
All that has left me broken-hearted?

ROSALIND.

Yes, speak. The faintest stars are scarcely shorn
Of their thin beams by that delusive morn
Which sinks again in darkness, like the light
Of early love soon lost in total night.

HELEN.

Alas! Italian winds are mild,
But my bosom is cold—wintry cold.
When the warm air weaves, among the fresh leaves,
Soft music, my poor brain is wild,
And I am weak like a nursling child,
Though my soul with grief is grey and old.

ROSALIND.

Weep not at thine own words, though they must make
Me weep. What is thy tale?

HELEN.

I fear 'twill shake
Thy gentle heart with tears.—Thou well
Rememberest when we met no more;
And, though I dwelt with Lionel,
That friendless caution pierced me sore
With grief—a wound my spirit bore
Indignantly. But, when he died,
With him lay dead both hope and pride.

Alas! all hope is buried now.
But then men dreamed the aged earth
Was labouring in that mighty birth
Which many a poet and a sage
Has aye foreseen—the happy age
When truth and love shall dwell below
Among the works and ways of men;
Which on this world not power but will
Even now is wanting to fulfil.
Among mankind what thence befell
Of strife, how vain, is known too well;
When liberty's dear pæan fell

'Mid murderous howls. To Lionel,
Though of great wealth and lineage high,
Yet through those dungeon walls there came
Thy thrilling light, O liberty!
And, as the meteor's midnight flame
Startles the dreamer, sun-like truth
Flashed on his visionary youth,
And filled him, not with love, but faith,
And hope, and courage mute in death;
For love and life in him were twins,
Born at one birth. In every other,
First life, then love, its course begins,
Though they be children of one mother;
And so through this dark world they fleet
Divided, till in death they meet:
But he loved all things ever. Then
He passed amid the strife of men,
And stood at the throne of armèd power
Pleading for a world of woe.
Secure as one on a rock-built tower
O'er the wrecks which the surge trails to and fro,
'Mid the passions wild of humankind
He stood, like a spirit calming them;
For, it was said, his words could bind
Like music the lulled crowd, and stem
That torrent of unquiet dream
Which mortals truth and reason deem,
But *is* revenge and fear and pride.
Joyous he was; and hope and peace
On all who heard him did abide,
Raining like dew from his sweet talk,—
As, where the evening star may walk
Along the brink of the gloomy seas,
Liquid mists of splendour quiver.
His very gestures touched to tears
The unpersuaded tyrant, never
So moved before: his presence stung
The torturers with their victims' pain,
And none knew how; and, through their ears,
The subtle witchcraft of his tongue
Unlocked the hearts of those who keep
Gold, the world's bond of slavery.

Men wondered and some sneered to see
One sow what he could never reap:
"For he is rich," they said, "and young,
And might drink from the depths of luxury.
If he seeks Fame, Fame never crowned
The champion of a trampled creed:
If he seeks Power, Power is enthroned
'Mid ancient rights and wrongs, to feed
Which hungry wolves with praise and spoil
Those who would sit near Power must toil;
And such, there sitting, all may see.
What seeks he? All that others seek
He casts away, like a vile weed
Which the sea casts unreturningly.
That poor and hungry men should break
The laws which wreak them toil and scorn
We understand; but Lionel,
We know, is rich and nobly born."
So wondered they; yet all men loved
Young Lionel, though few approved;
All but the priests, whose hatred fell
Like the unseen blight of a smiling day,
The withering honey-dew which clings
Under the bright-green buds of May
Whilst they unfold their emerald wings:
For he made verses wild and queer
On the strange creeds priests hold so dear
Because they bring them land and gold.
Of devils and saints, and all such gear,
He made tales which whoso heard or read
Would laugh till he were almost dead.
So this grew a proverb: "Don't get old
Till Lionel's *Banquet in Hell* you hear,
And then you will laugh yourself young again."
So the priests hated him, and he
Repaid their hate with cheerful glee.

Ah! smiles and joyance quickly died,
For public hope grew pale and dim
In an altered time and tide,
And in its wasting withered him;
As a summer flower that blows too soon
Droops in the smile of the waning moon,

When it scatters through an April night
The frozen dews of wrinkling blight.
None now hoped more. Grey Power was seated
Safely on her ancestral throne;
And Faith, the python, undefeated,
Even to its blood-stained steps dragged on
Her foul and wounded train; and men
Were trampled and deceived again;
And words and shows again could bind
The wailing tribes of humankind
In scorn and famine. Fire and blood
Raged round the raging multitude,
To fields remote by tyrants sent
To be the scornèd instrument
With which *they* drag from mines of gore
The chains their slaves yet ever wore.
And in the streets men met each other,
And by old altars and in halls,
And smiled again at festivals:
But each man found in his heart's brother
Cold cheer; for all, though half deceived,
The outworn creeds again believed.
And the same round anew began
Which the weary world yet ever ran.

Many then wept, not tears but gall,
Within their hearts, like drops which fall
Wasting the fountain-stone away.
And in that dark and evil day
Did all desires and thoughts that claim
Men's care—ambition, friendship, fame,
Love, hope, though hope was now despair—
Indue the colours of this change;
As from the all-surrounding air
The earth takes hues obscure and strange,
When storm and earthquake linger there.

And so, my friend, it then befell
To many, most to Lionel;
Whose hope was like the life of youth
Within him, and, when dead, became
A spirit of unresting flame,
Which goaded him in his distress

Over the world's vast wilderness.
Three years he left his native land,
And in the fourth, when he returned,
None knew him: he was stricken deep
With some disease of mind, and turned
Into aught unlike Lionel.
On him—on whom, did he pause in sleep,
Serenest smiles were wont to keep,
And, did he wake, a wingèd band
Of bright Persuasions, which had fed
On his sweet lips and liquid eyes,
Kept their swift pinions half outspread
To do on men his least command—
On him, whom once 'twas paradise
Even to behold, now misery lay.
In his own heart 'twas merciless:
To all things else none may express
Its innocence and tenderness.

'Twas said that he had refuge sought
In love from his unquiet thought
In distant lands, and been deceived
By some strange show; for there were found,
Blotted with tears (as those relieved
By their own words are wont to do),
These mournful verses on the ground,—
By all who read them blotted too.

"How am I changed! My hopes were once like fire:
I loved, and I believed that life was love.
How am I lost! On wings of swift desire
Among heaven's winds my spirit once did move.
I slept, and silver dreams did aye inspire
My liquid sleep. I woke, and did approve
All Nature to my heart, and thought to make
A paradise of earth for one sweet sake.

"I love, but I believe in love no more:
I feel desire, but hope not. Oh! from sleep
Most vainly must my weary brain implore
Its long-lost flattery now. I wake to weep,
And sit through the long day gnawing the core
Of my bitter heart, and, like a miser, keep—

Since none in what I feel take pain or pleasure—
To my own soul its self-consuming treasure."

He dwelt beside me near the sea;
And oft in evening did we meet,
When the waves, beneath the starlight, flee
O'er the yellow sands with silver feet,—
And talked. Our talk was sad and sweet,
Till slowly from his mien there passed
The desolation which it spoke;
And smiles—as, when the lightning's blast
Has parched some heaven-delighting oak,
The next Spring shows leaves pale and rare,
But like flowers delicate and fair,
On its rent boughs—again arrayed
His countenance in tender light.
His words grew subtle fire, which made
The air his hearers breathed delight:
His motions, like the winds, were free,
Which bend the bright grass gracefully,
Then fade away in circlets faint:
And wingèd Hope—on which upborne
His soul seemed hovering in his eyes,
Like some bright spirit newly born
Floating amid the sunny skies—
Sprang forth from his rent heart anew.
Yet o'er his talk and looks and mien,
Tempering their loveliness too keen,
Past woe its shadow backward threw;
Till, like an exhalation spread
From flowers half drunk with evening dew,
They did become infectious,—sweet
And subtle mists of sense and thought;
Which wrapped us soon, when we might meet,
Almost from our own looks, and aught
The wide world holds. And so his mind
Was healed, while mine grew sick with fear:
For ever now his health declined,
Like some frail bark which cannot bear
The impulse of an altered wind,
Though prosperous. And my heart grew full,
'Mid its new joy, of a new care:

For his cheek became, not pale, but fair,
As rose-o'ershadowed lilies are;
And soon his deep and sunny hair,
In this alone less beautiful,
Like grass in tombs grew wild and rare.
The blood in his translucent veins
Beat not like animal life, but love
Seemed now its sullen springs to move,
When life had failed, and all its pains;
And sudden sleep would seize him oft,
Like death, so calm,—but that a tear,
His pointed eyelashes between,
Would gather in the light serene
Of smiles whose lustre bright and soft
Beneath lay undulating there.
His breath was like inconstant flame,
As eagerly it went and came;
And I hung o'er him in his sleep,
Till, like an image in the lake
Which rains disturb, my tears would break
The shadow of that slumber deep.
Then he would bid me not to weep,
And say, with flattery false yet sweet,
That death and he could never meet,
If I would never part with him.
And so we loved, and did unite
All that in us was yet divided:
For—when he said that many a rite,
By men to bind but once provided,
Could not be shared by him and me,
Or they would kill him in their glee—
I shuddered, and then laughing said:
"We will have rites our faith to bind;
But our church shall be the starry night,
Our altar the grassy earth outspread,
And our priest the muttering wind."

'Twas sunset as I spoke. One star
Had scarce burst forth, when from afar
The ministers of misrule sent
Seized upon Lionel, and bore
His chained limbs to a dreary tower

In the midst of a city vast and wide :—
For he, they said, from his mind had bent
Against their gods keen blasphemy,
For which, though his soul must roasted be
In hell's red lakes immortally,
Yet even on earth must he abide
The vengeance of their slaves—a trial,
I think, men call it. What avail
Are prayers and tears, which chase denial
From the fierce savage nursed in hate?
What the knit soul that pleading and pale
Makes wan the quivering cheek, which late
It painted with its own delight?
We were divided. As I could,
I stilled the tingling of my blood;
And followed him in their despite,
As a widow follows, pale and wild,
The murderers and corse of her only child.
And, when we came to the prison door,
And I prayed to share his dungeon floor
With prayers which rarely have been spurned,
And when men drove me forth, and I
Stared with blank frenzy on the sky,—
A farewell look of love he turned,
Half calming me; then gazed awhile,
As if through that black and massy pile,
And through the crowd around him there,
And through the dense and murky air,
And the thronged streets, he did espy
What poets know and prophesy;
And said, with voice that made them shiver,
And clung like music in my brain,
And which the mute walls spoke again,
Prolonging it with deepened strain—
"Fear not the tyrants shall rule for ever,
Or the priests of the bloody faith;
They stand on the brink of that mighty river
Whose waves they have tainted with death:
It is fed from the depths of a thousand dells,
Around them it foams and rages and swells,
And their swords and their sceptres I floating see,
Like wrecks, in the surge of eternity."

I dwelt beside the prison gate;
And the strange crowd that out and in
Passed (some, no doubt, with mine own fate)
Might have fretted me with its ceaseless din,
But the fever of care was louder within.
Soon, but too late, in penitence
Or fear, his foes released him thence.
I saw his thin and languid form,
As, leaning on the gaoler's arm—
Whose hardened eyes grew moist the while
To meet his mute and faded smile,
And hear his words of kind farewell—
He tottered forth from his damp cell.
Many had never wept before
From whom fast tears then gushed and fell;
Many will relent no more
Who sobbed like infants then; ay, all
Who thronged the prison's stony hall,
The rulers or the slaves of law,
Felt with a new surprise and awe
That they were human,—till strong shame
Made them again become the same.
The prison bloodhounds, huge and grim,
From human looks the infection caught,
And fondly crouched and fawned on him.
And men have heard the prisoners say
Who in their rotting dungeons lay
That from that hour, throughout one day,
The fierce despair and hate which kept
Their trampled bosoms almost slept,
When, like twin vultures, they hung feeding
On each heart's wound, wide-torn and bleeding,—
Because their gaoler's rule, they thought,
Grew merciful, like a parent's sway.

I know not how, but we were free.
And Lionel sate alone with me,
As the carriage drove through the streets apace;
And we looked upon each other's face;
And the blood in our fingers intertwined
Ran like the thoughts of a single mind,
As the swift emotions went and came

Through the veins of each united frame.
So through the long long streets we passed
Of the million-peopled city vast;
Which is that desert where each one
Seeks his mate, yet is alone,
Beloved and sought and mourned of none;—
Until the clear blue sky was seen,
And the grassy meadows bright and green.
And then I sunk in his embrace,
Enclosing there a mighty space
Of love. And so we travelled on
By woods, and fields of yellow flowers,
And towns and villages and towers,
Day after day of happy hours.
It was the azure time of June,
When the skies are deep in the stainless noon,
And the warm and fitful breezes shake
The fresh green leaves of the hedge-row briar;
And there were odours then to make
The very breath we did respire
A liquid element, whereon
Our spirits, like delighted things
That walk the air on subtle wings,
Floated and mingled far away,
'Mid the warm winds of the sunny day.
And, when the evening star came forth
Above the curve of the new bent moon,
And light and sound ebbed from the earth,
Like the tide of the full and weary sea
To the depths of its own tranquillity,
Our natures to its own repose
Did the earth's breathless sleep attune.
Like flowers which on each other close
Their languid leaves when daylight's gone,
We lay; till new emotions came
Which seemed to make each mortal frame
One soul of interwoven flame,—
A life in life, a second birth
In worlds diviner far than earth—
Which (like two strains of harmony
That mingle in the silent sky,
Then slowly disunite) passed by,

And left the tenderness of tears,
A soft oblivion of all fears,
A sweet sleep. So we travelled on
Till we came to the home of Lionel,
Among the mountains wild and lone,
Beside the hoary western sea,
Which near the verge of the echoing shore
The massy forest shadowed o'er.

The ancient steward, with hair all hoar,
As we alighted, wept to see
His master changed so fearfully;
And the old man's sobs did waken me
From my dream of unremaining gladness.
The truth flashed o'er me like quick madness,
When I looked, and saw that there was death
On Lionel. Yet day by day
He lived, till fear grew hope and faith,
And in my soul I dared to say,
"Nothing so bright can pass away:
Death is dark and foul and dull,
But he is—oh how beautiful!"
Yet day by day he grew more weak,
And his sweet voice, when he might speak,
Which ne'er was loud, became more low;
And the light which flashed through his waxen cheek
Grew faint, as the rose-like hues which flow
From sunset o'er the alpine snow.
And death seemed not like death in him,
For the spirit of life o'er every limb
Lingered, a mist of sense and thought.
When the summer wind faint odours brought
From mountain flowers, even as it passed,
His cheek would change, as the noonday sea
Which the dying breeze sweeps fitfully.
If but a cloud the sky o'ercast,
You might see his colour come and go;
And the softest strain of music made
Sweet smiles, yet sad, arise and fade
Amid the dew of his tender eyes:
And the breath, with intermitting flow,
Made his pale lips quiver and part.

You might hear the beatings of his heart,
Quick but not strong; and, with my tresses
When oft he playfully would bind
In the bowers of mossy lonelinesses
His neck, and win me so to mingle
In the sweet depth of woven caresses,
And our faint limbs were intertwined,—
Alas! the unquiet life did tingle
From mine own heart through every vein;
Like a captive, in dreams of liberty,
Who beats the walls of his stony cell.
But his,—it seemed already free,
Like the shadow of fire surrounding me.
On my faint eyes and limbs did dwell
That spirit as it passed; till soon
(As a frail cloud wandering o'er the moon—
Beneath its light, invisible—
Is seen when it folds its grey wings again
To alight on midnight's dusky plain)
I lived and saw, and the gathering soul
Passed from beneath that strong control,
And I fell on a life which was sick with fear
Of all the woe that now I bear.

Amid a bloomless myrtle wood
On a green and sea-girt promontory
Not far from where we dwelt, there stood,
In record of a sweet sad story,
An altar and a temple bright
Circled by steps, and o'er the gate
Was sculptured "To Fidelity."
And in the shrine an image sate,
All veiled: but there was seen the light
Of smiles which faintly could express
A mingled pain and tenderness,
Through that etherial drapery.
The left hand held the head, the right—
Beyond the veil, beneath the skin,
You might see the nerves quivering within—
Was forcing the point of a barbèd dart
Into its side-convulsing heart.
An unskilled hand, yet one informed

With genius, had the marble warmed
With that pathetic life. This tale
It told: A dog had from the sea,
When the tide was raging fearfully,
Dragged Lionel's mother, weak and pale,
Then died beside her on the sand.
And she that temple thence had planned;
But it was Lionel's own hand
Had wrought the image. Each new moon
That lady did, in this lone fane,
The rites of a religion sweet
Whose god was in her heart and brain.
The seasons' loveliest flowers were strewn
On the marble floor beneath her feet;
And she brought crowns of sea-buds white
Whose odour is so sweet and faint,
And weeds, like branching chrysolite,
Woven in devices fine and quaint;
And tears from her brown eyes did stain
The altar. Need but look upon
That dying statue fair and wan,
If tears should cease, to weep again.
And rare Arabian odours came
Through the myrtle copses, steaming thence
From the hissing frankincense,
Whose smoke, wool-white as ocean foam,
Hung in dense flocks beneath the dome—
That ivory dome whose azure night
With golden stars, like heaven, was bright—
O'er the split cedars' pointed flame.
And the lady's harp would kindle there
The melody of an old air
Softer than sleep; the villagers
Mixed their religion up with hers,
And, as they listened round, shed tears.

One eve he led me to this fane.
Daylight on its last purple cloud
Was lingering grey, and soon her strain
The nightingale began; now loud,
Climbing in circles the windless sky,
Now dying music; suddenly

'Tis scattered in a thousand notes;
And now to the hushed ear it floats
Like field-smells known in infancy,—
Then, failing, soothes the air again.
We sate within that temple lone,
Pavilioned round with Parian stone:
His mother's harp stood near, and oft
I had awakened music soft
Amid its wires. The nightingale
Was pausing in her heaven-taught tale.
"Now drain the cup," said Lionel,
"Which the poet-bird has crowned so well
With the wine of her bright and liquid song!
Heard'st thou not sweet words among
That heaven-resounding minstrelsy?
Heard'st thou not that those who die
Awake in a world of ecstasy?
That love when limbs are interwoven,
And sleep when the night of life is cloven,
And thought to the world's dim boundaries clinging,
And music when one beloved is singing,
Is death? Let us drain right joyously
The cup which the sweet bird fills for me."

He paused, and to my lips he bent
His own. Like spirit, his words went
Through all my limbs with the speed of fire;
And his keen eyes, glittering through mine,
Filled me with the flame divine
Which in their orbs was burning far,
Like the light of an unmeasured star
In the sky of midnight dark and deep.
Yes, 'twas his soul that did inspire
Sounds which my skill could ne'er awaken.
And first, I felt my fingers sweep
The harp, and a long quivering cry
Burst from my lips in symphony:
The dusk and solid air was shaken,
As swift and swifter the notes came
From my touch, that wandered like quick flame,
And from my bosom labouring
With some unutterable thing.

The awful sound of my own voice made
My faint lips tremble. In some mood
Of wordless thought Lionel stood—
So pale that even, beside his cheek,
The snowy column from its shade
Caught whiteness: yet his countenance,
Raised upward, burned with radiance
Of spirit-piercing joy, whose light,
Like the moon struggling through the night
Of whirlwind-rifted clouds, did break
With beams that might not be confined.

I paused. But soon his gestures kindled
New power, as by the moving wind
The waves are lifted; and my song
To low soft notes now changed and dwindled;
And, from the twinkling wires among,
My languid fingers drew and flung
Circles of life-dissolving sound,
Yet faint. In aëry rings they bound
My Lionel. As every strain
Grew fainter but more sweet, his mien
Sunk with the sound relaxedly;
And slowly now he turned to me,
As slowly faded from his face
That awful joy. With looks serene
He was soon drawn to my embrace;
And my wild song then died away
In murmurs. Words I dare not say
We mixed; and on his lips mine fed,
Till they methought felt still and cold.
"What is it with thee, love?" I said;—
No word, no look, no motion! Yes,
There was a change; but spare to guess,
Nor let that moment's hope be told.
I looked,—and knew that he was dead;
And fell, as the eagle on the plain
Falls when life deserts her brain,
And the mortal lightning is veiled again.

Oh that I were now dead! But such
(Did they not, love, demand too much,
Those dying murmurs?) he forbad.

Oh that I once again were mad!—
And yet, dear Rosalind, not so,
For I would live to share thy woe.
Sweet boy! did I forget thee too?
Alas! we know not what we do
When we speak words!
No memory more
Is in my mind of that sea-shore.
Madness came on me, and a troop
Of misty shapes did seem to sit
Beside me on a vessel's poop,
And the clear north wind was driving it.
Then I heard strange tongues, and saw strange flowers;
And the stars, methought, grew unlike ours;
And the azure sky and the stormless sea
Made me believe that I had died,
And waked in a world which was to me
Drear hell, though heaven to all beside.
Then a dead sleep fell on my mind;
Whilst animal life many long years
Had rescued from a chasm of tears.
And, when I woke, I wept to find
That the same lady, bright and wise,
With silver locks and quick brown eyes,
The mother of my Lionel,
Had tended me in my distress,—
And died some months before. Nor less
Wonder, but far more peace and joy,
Brought in that hour my lovely boy.
For through that trance my soul had well
The impress of thy being kept,
And, if I waked or if I slept,
No doubt, though memory faithless be,
Thy image ever dwelt on me;
And thus, O Lionel! like thee
Is our sweet child. 'Tis sure most strange
I knew not of so great a change
As that which gave him birth who now
Is all the solace of my woe.

That Lionel great wealth had left
By will to me—and that, of all,

The ready lies of law bereft
My child and me—might well befall.
But let me think not of the scorn
Which from the meanest I have borne
When, for my child's beloved sake,
I mixed with slaves, to vindicate
The very laws themselves do make.
Let me not say scorn is my fate,
Lest I be proud, suffering the same
With those who live in deathless fame.

She ceased.—"Lo where red morning through the wood
Is burning o'er the dew!" said Rosalind.
And with these words they rose, and towards the flood
Of the blue lake, beneath the leaves, now wind
With equal steps and fingers intertwined.
Thence to a lonely dwelling—where the shore
Is shadowed with steep rocks, and cypresses
Cleave with their dark-green cones the silent skies,
And with their shadows the clear depths below,
And where a little terrace, from its bowers
Of blooming myrtle and faint lemon-flowers,
Scatters its sense-dissolving fragrance o'er
The liquid marble of the windless lake,
And where the aged forest's limbs look hoar,
Under the leaves which their green garments make—
They come. 'Tis Helen's home; and clean and white,
Like one which tyrants spare on our own land
In some such solitude; its casements bright
Shone through their vine-leaves in the morning sun,
And even within 'twas scarce like Italy.
And, when she saw how all things there were planned
As in an English home, dim memory
Disturbed poor Rosalind: she stood as one
Whose mind is where his body cannot be.
Till Helen led her where her child yet slept,
And said: "Observe—that brow was Lionel's,
Those lips were his, and so he ever kept
One arm in sleep, pillowing his head with it.
You cannot see his eyes,—they are two wells
Of liquid love. Let us not wake him yet."
But Rosalind could bear no more, and wept

A shower of burning tears, which fell upon
His face; and so his opening lashes shone
With tears unlike his own, as he did leap
In sudden wonder from his innocent sleep.

So Rosalind and Helen lived together
Thenceforth; changed in all else, yet friends again,
Such as they were when o'er the mountain heather
They wandered in their youth, through sun and rain.
And after many years (for human things
Change even like the ocean and the wind)
Her daughter was restored to Rosalind;
And in their circle thence some visitings
Of joy 'mid their new calm would intervene.
A lovely child she was, of looks serene,
And motions which o'er things indifferent shed
The grace and gentleness from whence they came.
And Helen's boy grew with her, and they fed
From the same flowers of thought, until each mind
Like springs which mingle in one flood became;
And in their union soon their parents saw
The shadow of the peace denied to them.

And Rosalind—for, when the living stem
Is cankered in its heart, the tree must fall—
Died ere her time. And with deep grief and awe
The pale survivors followed her remains,
Beyond the region of dissolving rains,
Up the cold mountain she was wont to call
Her tomb. And on Chiavenna's precipice
They raised a pyramid of lasting ice;
Whose polished sides, ere day had yet begun,
Caught the first glow of the unrisen sun,
The last, when it had sunk. And through the night
The charioteers of Arctos wheeled round
Its glittering point, as seen from Helen's home;
Whose sad inhabitants each year would come,
With willing steps climbing that rugged height,
And hang long locks of hair, and garlands bound
With amaranth flowers, which, in the clime's despite,
Filled the frore air with unaccustomed light.
Such flowers as in the wintry memory bloom
Of one friend left adorned that frozen tomb.

Helen, whose spirit was of softer mould,
Whose sufferings too were less, Death slowlier led
Into the peace of his dominion cold:
She died among her kindred, being old.
And know that, if love die not in the dead
As in the living, none of mortal kind
Are blessed as now Helen and Rosalind.

NOTE ON ROSALIND AND HELEN, BY MRS. SHELLEY.

Rosalind and Helen was begun at Marlow, and thrown aside—till I found it; and, at my request, it was completed. Shelley had no care for any of his poems that did not emanate from the depths of his mind, and develop some high or abstruse truth. When he does touch on human life and the human heart, no pictures can be more faithful, more delicate, more subtle, or more pathetic. He never mentioned love but he shed a grace borrowed from his own nature, that scarcely any other poet has bestowed, on that passion. When he spoke of it as the law of life, which inasmuch as we rebel against we err and injure ourselves and others, he promulgated that which he considered an irrefragable truth. In his eyes it was the essence of our being, and all woe and pain arose from the war made against it by selfishness, or insensibility, or mistake. By reverting in his mind to this first principle, he discovered the source of many emotions, and could disclose the secret of all hearts; and his delineations of passion and emotion touch the finest chords of our nature.

Rosalind and Helen was finished during the summer of 1818, while we were at the Baths of Lucca.

JULIAN AND MADDALO.

A CONVERSATION.

Count Maddalo is a Venetian nobleman of ancient family and of great fortune, who, without mixing much in the society of his countrymen, resides chiefly at his magnificent palace in that city. He is a person of the most consummate genius, and capable, if he would direct his energies to such an end, of becoming the redeemer of his degraded country. But it is his weakness to be proud: he derives, from a comparison of his own extraordinary mind with the dwarfish intellects that surround him, an intense apprehension of the nothingness of human life. His passions and his powers are incomparably greater than those of other men; and, instead of the latter having been employed in curbing the former, they have mutually lent each other strength. His ambition preys upon itself, for want of objects which it can consider worthy of exertion. I say that Maddalo is proud, because I can find no other word to express the concentred and impatient feelings which consume him; but it is on his own hopes and affections only that he seems to trample, for in social life no human being can be more gentle, patient, and unassuming, than Maddalo. He is cheerful, frank, and witty. His more serious conversation is a sort of intoxication; men are held by it as by a spell. He has travelled much, and there is an inexpressible charm in his relation of his adventures in different countries.

Julian is an Englishman of good family; passionately attached to those philosophical notions which assert the power of man over his own mind, and the immense improvements of which, by the extinction of certain moral superstitions, human society may yet be susceptible. Without concealing the evil in the world, he is for ever speculating how good may be made superior. He is a complete infidel, and a scoffer at all things reputed holy; and Maddalo takes a wicked pleasure in drawing out his taunts against religion. What Maddalo thinks on these matters is not exactly known. Julian, in spite of his heterodox opinions, is conjectured by his friends to possess some good qualities. How far this is possible the pious reader will determine. Julian is rather serious.

Of the Maniac I can give no information. He seems, by his own account, to have been disappointed in love. He was evidently a very cultivated and amiable person when in his right senses. His story, told at length, might be like many other stories of the same kind: the unconnected exclamations of his agony will perhaps be found a sufficient comment for the text of every heart.

The meadows with fresh streams, the bees with thyme,
The goats with the green leaves of budding Spring,
Are saturated not—nor Love with tears.—VIRGIL'S GALLUS.

I RODE one evening with Count Maddalo
Upon the bank of land which breaks the flow
Of Adria towards Venice. A bare strand
Of hillocks heaped from ever-shifting sand,
Matted with thistles and amphibious weeds
Such as from earth's embrace the salt ooze breeds,
Is this; an uninhabited sea-side,
Which the lone fisher, when his nets are dried,
Abandons. And no other object breaks
The waste, but one dwarf tree, and some few stakes
Broken and unrepaired; and the tide makes
A narrow space of level sand thereon,—
Where 'twas our wont to ride while day went down.
This ride was my delight. I love all waste
And solitary places; where we taste
The pleasure of believing what we see
Is boundless, as we wish our souls to be:
And such was this wide ocean, and this shore
More barren than its billows. And, yet more
Than all, with a remembered friend I love
To ride as then I rode;—for the winds drove
The living spray along the sunny air
Into our faces; the blue heavens were bare,
Stripped to their depths by the awakening north;
And from the waves sound like delight broke forth,
Harmonizing with solitude, and sent
Into our hearts aërial merriment.

So, as we rode, we talked; and the swift thought,
Winging itself with laughter, lingered not,
But flew from brain to brain. Such glee was ours,
Charged with light memories of remembered hours,
None slow enough for sadness; till we came
Homeward, which always makes the spirit tame.
This day had been cheerful but cold; and now
The sun was sinking, and the wind also.
Our talk grew somewhat serious, as may be
Talk interrupted with such raillery
As mocks itself, because it cannot scorn
The thoughts it would extinguish:—'twas forlorn,
Yet pleasing; such as once, so poets tell,
The devils held within the dales of hell,
Concerning God, freewill, and destiny.
Of all that Earth has been, or yet may be;
All that vain men imagine or believe,
Or hope can paint or suffering can achieve,
We descanted; and I (for ever still
Is it not wise to make the best of ill?)
Argued against despondency; but pride
Made my companion take the darker side.
The sense that he was greater than his kind
Had struck, methinks, his eagle spirit blind
By gazing on its own exceeding light.

Meanwhile the sun paused ere it should alight
Over the horizon of the mountains. Oh!
How beautiful is sunset, when the glow
Of heaven descends upon a land like thee,
Thou paradise of exiles, Italy,
Thy mountains, seas, and vineyards, and the towers
Of cities they encircle!—It was ours
To stand on thee, beholding it: and then,
Just where we had dismounted, the Count's men
Were waiting for us with the gondola.
As those who pause on some delightful way,
Though bent on pleasant pilgrimage, we stood
Looking upon the evening, and the flood
Which lay between the city and the shore,
Paved with the image of the sky. The hoar
And aery Alps, towards the north, appeared

Through mist—an heaven-sustaining bulwark reared
Between the east and west; and half the sky
Was roofed with clouds of rich emblazonry,
Dark purple at the zenith, which still grew
Down the steep west into a wondrous hue
Brighter than burning gold, even to the rent
Where the swift sun yet paused in his descent
Among the many-folded hills. They were
Those famous Euganean hills, which bear,
As seen from Lido through the harbour piles,
The likeness of a clump of peaked isles.
And then, as if the earth and sea had been
Dissolved into one lake of fire, were seen
Those mountains towering, as from waves of flame,
Around the vaporous sun; from which there came
The inmost purple spirit of light, and made
Their very peaks transparent.
"Ere it fade,"
Said my companion, "I will show you soon
A better station."
So, o'er the lagune
We glided; and from that funereal bark
I leaned, and saw the city, and could mark
How from their many isles, in evening's gleam,
Its temples and its palaces did seem
Like fabrics of enchantment piled to heaven.
I was about to speak, when—
"We are even
Now at the point I meant," said Maddalo,—
And bade the gondolieri cease to row.
"Look, Julian, on the west, and listen well
If you hear not a deep and heavy bell."

I looked, and saw between us and the sun
A building on an island, such an one
As age to age might add, for uses vile,—
A windowless, deformed, and dreary pile;
And on the top an open tower, where hung
A bell which in the radiance swayed and swung,—
We could just hear its hoarse and iron tongue:
The broad sun sank behind it, and it tolled
In strong and black relief.—

"What we behold
Shall be the madhouse and its belfry tower,"—
Said Maddalo; "and ever at this hour
Those who may cross the water hear that bell,
Which calls the maniacs, each one from his cell,
To vespers."
"As much skill as need to pray
In thanks or hope for their dark lot have they
To their stern maker," I replied.
"Oho!
You talk as in years past," said Maddalo.
"'Tis strange men change not. You were ever still
Among Christ's flock a perilous infidel,
A wolf for the meek lambs. If you can't swim,
Beware of providence!" I looked on him,
But the gay smile had faded from his eye.
"And such," he cried, "is our mortality!
And this must be the emblem and the sign
Of what should be eternal and divine;
And, like that black and dreary bell, the soul,
Hung in an heaven-illumined tower, must toll
Our thoughts and our desires to meet below
Round the rent heart, and pray—as madmen do;
For what? they know not, till the night of death,
As sunset that strange vision, severeth
Our memory from itself, and us from all
We sought, and yet were baffled."—
I recall
The sense of what he said, although I mar
The force of his expressions. The broad star
Of day meanwhile had sunk behind the hill;
And the black bell became invisible;
And the red tower looked grey; and, all between,
The churches, ships, and palaces, were seen
Huddled in gloom; into the purple sea
The orange hues of heaven sunk silently.
We hardly spoke, and soon the gondola
Conveyed me to my lodging by the way.

The following morn was rainy, cold, and dim.
Ere Maddalo arose, I called on him;
And, whilst I waited, with his child I played.

A lovelier toy sweet Nature never made;
A serious, subtle, wild, yet gentle being;
Graceful without design, and unforeseeing;
With eyes—oh speak not of her eyes! which seem
Twin mirrors of Italian heaven, yet gleam
With such deep meaning as we never see
But in the human countenance. With me
She was a special favourite: I had nursed
Her fine and feeble limbs when she came first
To this bleak world; and she yet seemed to know
On second sight her ancient playfellow,
Less changed than she was by six months or so.
For, after her first shyness was worn out,
We sate there, rolling billiard balls about,—
When the Count entered.
Salutations passed:
"The words you spoke last night might well have cast
A darkness on my spirit. If man be
The passive thing you say, I should not see
Much harm in the religions and old saws
(Though *I* may never own such leaden laws)
Which break a teachless nature to the yoke:
Mine is another faith."—Thus much I spoke,
And, noting he replied not, added—"See
This lovely child; blithe, innocent, and free:
She spends a happy time, with little care;
While we to such sick thoughts subjected are
As came on you last night. It is our will
Which thus enchains us to permitted ill.
We might be otherwise; we might be all
We dream of, happy, high, majestical.
Where is the beauty, love, and truth, we seek,
But in our minds? And, if we were not weak,
Should we be less in deed than in desire?"—

"Ay, *if* we were not weak,—and we aspire,
How vainly! to be strong," said Maddalo:
"You talk Utopia."
"It remains to know,"
I then rejoined; "and those who try may find
How strong the chains are which our spirit bind:
Brittle perchance as straw. We are assured

Much may be conquered, much may be endured,
Of what degrades and crushes us. We know
That we have power over ourselves to do
And suffer—*what*, we know not till we try,
But something nobler than to live and die.
So taught the kings of old philosophy
Who reigned before religion made men blind;
And those who suffer with their suffering kind
Yet feel this faith Religion."
"My dear friend,"
Said Maddalo, "my judgment will not bend
To your opinion, though I think you might
Make such a system refutation-tight,
As far as words go. I knew one like you,
Who to this city came some months ago,
With whom I argued in this sort,—and he
Is now gone mad—and so he answered me,
Poor fellow!—But, if you would like to go,
We 'll visit him, and his wild talk will show
How vain are such aspiring theories."

"I hope to prove the induction otherwise,
And that a want of that true theory still
Which seeks a soul of goodness in things ill,
Or in himself or others, has thus bowed
His being. There are some by nature proud,
Who, patient in all else, demand but this—
To love and be beloved with gentleness:
And, being scorned, what wonder if they die
Some living death? This is not destiny,
But man's own wilful ill."
As thus I spoke,
Servants announced the gondola, and we
Through the fast-falling rain and high-wrought sea
Sailed to the island where the Madhouse stands.
We disembarked. The clap of tortured hands,
Fierce yells, and howlings, and lamentings keen,
And laughter where complaint had merrier been,
Accosted us. We climbed the oozy stairs
Into an old courtyard. I heard on high
Then fragments of most touching melody;
But, looking up, saw not the singer there.

Through the black bars, in the tempestuous air,
I saw, like weeds on a wrecked palace growing,
Long tangled locks, flung wildly forth and flowing,
Of those who on a sudden were beguiled
Into strange silence, and looked forth and smiled,
Hearing sweet sounds. Then I:

"Methinks there were
A cure of these with patience and kind care,
If music can thus move. But what is he
Whom we seek here?"

"Of his sad history
I know but this," said Maddalo. "He came
To Venice a dejected man, and fame
Said he was wealthy, or he had been so:
Some thought the loss of fortune wrought him woe.
But he was ever talking in such sort
As you do,—but more sadly; he seemed hurt,
Even as a man with his peculiar wrong,
To hear but of the oppression of the strong,
Or those absurd deceits (I think with you
In some respects, you know) which carry through
The excellent impostors of this earth,
When they outface detection. He had worth,
Poor fellow, but a humourist in his way."

"Alas! what drove him mad?"

"I cannot say:
A lady came with him from France; and, when
She left him and returned, he wandered then
About yon lonely isles of desert sand,
Till he grew wild. He had no cash or land
Remaining. The police had brought him here:
Some fancy took him, and he would not bear
Removal. So I fitted up for him
Those rooms beside the sea, to please his whim;
And sent him busts, and books, and urns for flowers,
Which had adorned his life in happier hours,
And instruments of music. You may guess
A stranger could do little more, or less,
For one so gentle and unfortunate:
And those are his sweet strains which charm the weight
From madmen's chains, and make this hell appear
A heaven of sacred silence hushed to hear."

"Nay, this was kind of you,—he had no claim,
As the world says."
"None but the very same
Which I on all mankind, were I, as he,
Fallen to such deep reverse. His melody
Is interrupted now: we hear the din
Of madmen, shriek on shriek, again begin.
Let us now visit him: after this strain,
He ever communes with himself again,
And sees and hears not any."
Having said
These words, we called the keeper, and he led
To an apartment opening on the sea.
There the poor wretch was sitting mournfully
Near a piano, his pale fingers twined
One with the other; and the ooze and wind
Rushed through an open casement, and did sway
His hair, and starred it with the brackish spray.
His head was leaning on a music-book,
And he was muttering, and his lean limbs shook.
His lips were pressed against a folded leaf,
In hue too beautiful for health; and grief
Smiled in their motions as they lay apart,
As one who wrought from his own fervid heart
The eloquence of passion. Soon he raised
His sad meek face, and eyes lustrous and glazed,
And spoke,—sometimes as one who wrote, and thought
His words might move some heart that heeded not,
If sent to distant lands; and then as one
Reproaching deeds never to be undone,
With wondering self-compassion. Then his speech
Was lost in grief, and then his words came each
Unmodulated and expressionless,—
But that from one jarred accent you might guess
It was despair made them so uniform.
And all the while the loud and gusty storm
Hissed through the window;—and we stood behind,
Stealing his accents from the envious wind,
Unseen. I yet remember what he said
Distinctly, such impression his words made.

"Month after month," he cried, "to bear this load!

And, as a jade urged by the whip and goad,
To drag life on—which like a heavy chain
Lengthens behind with many a link of pain!
And not to speak my grief—Oh not to dare
To give a human voice to my despair!
But live, and move, and, wretched thing! smile on,
As if I never went aside to groan,—
And wear this mask of falsehood even to those
Who are most dear—not for my own repose.
Alas! no scorn or pain or hate could be
So heavy as that falsehood is to me—
But that I cannot bear more altered faces
Than needs must be, more changed and cold embraces,
More misery, disappointment, and mistrust,
To own me for their father. Would the dust
Were covered in upon my body now—
That the life ceased to toil within my brow!
And then these thoughts would at the last be fled:
Let us not fear such pain can vex the dead.

"What power delights to torture us? I know
That to myself I do not wholly owe
What now I suffer, though in part I may.
Alas! none strewed fresh flowers upon the way
Where, wandering heedlessly, I met pale Pain,
My shadow, which will leave me not again.
If I have erred, there was no joy in error,
But pain and insult and unrest and terror.
I have not, as some do, bought penitence
With pleasure and a dark yet sweet offence;
For then, if love and tenderness and truth
Had overlived hope's momentary youth,
My creed should have redeemed me from repenting.
But loathèd scorn and outrage unrelenting
Met love, excited by far other seeming,
Until the end was gained:—as one from dreaming
Of sweetest peace, I woke, and found my state
Such as it is!—
"O thou, my spirit's mate!
Who, for thou art compassionate and wise,
Wouldst pity me from thy most gentle eyes
If this sad writing thou shouldst ever see,

My secret groans must be unheard by thee;
Thou wouldst weep tears bitter as blood, to know
Thy lost friend's incommunicable woe.
Ye few by whom my nature has been weighed
In friendship, let me not that name degrade
By placing on your hearts the secret load
Which crushes mine to dust. There is one road
To peace,—and that is truth, which follow ye:
Love sometimes leads astray to misery.
Yet think not, though subdued (and I may well
Say that I am subdued), that the full hell
Within me would infect the untainted breast
Of sacred nature with its own unrest;
As some perverted beings think to find
In scorn or hate a medicine for the mind
Which scorn or hate hath wounded:—oh how vain!
The dagger heals not, but may rend again.
Believe that I am ever still the same
In creed as in resolve; and what may tame
My heart must leave the understanding free,
Or all would sink under this agony.
Nor dream that I will join the vulgar lie,
Or with my silence sanction tyranny;
Or seek a moment's shelter from my pain
In any madness which the world calls gain,
Ambition, or revenge, or thoughts as stern
As those which make me what I am; or turn
To avarice or misanthropy or lust.
Heap on me soon, O grave, thy welcome dust!
Till then the dungeon may demand its prey;
And Poverty and Shame may meet and say,
Halting beside me in the public way,
'That love-devoted youth is ours: let's sit
Beside him: he may live some six months yet.'
Or the red scaffold, as our country bends,
May ask some willing victim; or ye, friends,
May fall under some sorrow, which this heart
Or hand may share or vanquish or avert.
I am prepared,—in truth, with no proud joy,—
To do or suffer aught; as when, a boy,
I did devote to justice and to love
My nature, worthless now.

"I must remove
A veil from my pent mind. 'Tis torn aside!
Oh pallid as Death's dedicated bride,
Thou mockery which art sitting by my side,
Am I not wan like thee? At the grave's call
I haste, invited to thy wedding-ball,
To meet the ghastly paramour for whom
Thou hast deserted me, and made the tomb
Thy bridal bed. But I beside thy feet
Will lie, and watch ye from my winding-sheet
Thus—wide awake though dead.—Yet stay, oh stay!
Go not so soon!—I know not what I say—
Hear but my reasons!—I am mad, I fear,
My fancy is o'erwrought.—Thou art not here;
Pale art thou, 'tis most true——But thou art gone—
Thy work is finished; I am left alone.

"Nay, was it I who wooed thee to this breast,
Which like a serpent thou envenomest
As in repayment of the warmth it lent?
Didst thou not seek me for thine own content?
Did not thy love awaken mine? I thought
That thou wert she who said, 'You kiss me not
Ever; I fear you do not love me now.'
In truth I loved even to my overthrow
Her who would fain forget these words,—but they
Cling to her mind, and cannot pass away.

"You say that I am proud; that, when I speak,
My lip is tortured with the wrongs which break
The spirit it expresses.—Never one
Humbled himself before as I have done.
Even the instinctive worm on which we tread
Turns, though it wound not—then with prostrate head
Sinks in the dust, and writhes like me—and dies:
——No, wears a living death of agonies.
As the slow shadows of the pointed grass
Mark the eternal periods, its pangs pass,
Slow, ever-moving, making moments be
As mine seem—each an immortality!

"That you had never seen me! never heard
My voice! and more than all had ne'er endured

The deep pollution of my loathed embrace!
That your eyes ne'er had lied love in my face!
That, like some maniac monk, I had torn out
The nerves of manhood by their bleeding root
With mine own quivering fingers, so that ne'er
Our hearts had for a moment mingled there,
To disunite in horror! These were not,
With thee, like some suppressed and hideous thought,
Which flits athwart our musings, but can find
No rest within a pure and gentle mind:
Thou sealedst them with many a bare broad word,
And searedst my memory o'er them,—for I heard
And can forget not;—they were ministered
One after one, those curses. Mix them up
Like self-destroying poisons in one cup;
And they will make one blessing which thou ne'er
Didst imprecate for on me——death!
"It were
A cruel punishment for one most cruel,
If such can love, to make that love the fuel
Of the mind's hell—hate, scorn, remorse, despair.
But *me*, whose heart a stranger's tear might wear
As water-drops the sandy fountain-stone;
Who loved and pitied all things, and could moan
For woes which others hear not, and could see
The absent with a glass of fantasy,
And near the poor and trampled sit and weep,
Following the captive to his dungeon deep;
Me, who am as a nerve o'er which do creep
The else-unfelt oppressions of this earth,
And was to thee the flame upon thy hearth
When all beside was cold:—that thou on me
Shouldst rain these plagues of blistering agony!
Such curses are, from lips once eloquent
With love's too partial praise. Let none relent
Who intend deeds too dreadful for a name,
Henceforth, if an example for the same
They seek:—for thou on me lookedst so and so,
And didst speak thus and thus! I live to show,
How much men bear, and die not.
"Thou wilt tell,
With the grimace of hate, how horrible

It was to meet my love when thine grew less;
Thou wilt admire how I could e'er address
Such features to love's work. This taunt, though true,
(For indeed Nature nor in form nor hue
Bestowed on me her choicest workmanship)
Shall not be thy defence: for, since thy lip
Met mine first, years long past—since thine eye kindled
With soft fire under mine,—I have not dwindled,
Nor changed in mind or body, or in aught,
But as love changes what it loveth not
After long years and many trials.
"How vain
Are words! I thought never to speak again,
Not even in secret, not to my own heart—
But from my lips the unwilling accents start,
And from my pen the words flow as I write,
Dazzling my eyes with scalding tears. My sight
Is dim to see that charactered in vain
On this unfeeling leaf which burns the brain
And eats into it, blotting all things fair
And wise and good which time had written there.
Those who inflict must suffer; for they see
The work of their own hearts, and that must be
Our chastisement or recompense.—O child!
I would that thine were like to be more mild,
For both our wretched sakes,—for thine the most,
Who feel'st already all that thou hast lost,
Without the power to wish it thine again.
And, as slow years pass, a funereal train,
Each with the ghost of some lost hope or friend
Following it like its shadow, wilt thou bend
No thought on my dead memory?
"Alas, love!
Fear me not: against thee I 'd not move
A finger in despite. Do I not live
That thou mayst have less bitter cause to grieve?
I give thee tears for scorn, and love for hate;
And, that thy lot may be less desolate
Than his on whom thou tramplest, I refrain
From that sweet sleep which medicines all pain.
Then—when thou speakest of me—never say
'He could forgive not.'—Here I cast away

All human passions, all revenge, all pride;
I think, speak, act, no ill; I do but hide
Under these words, like embers, every spark
Of that which has consumed me. Quick and dark
The grave is yawning:—as its roof shall cover
My limbs with dust and worms, under and over,
So let oblivion hide this grief.—The air
Closes upon my accents, as despair
Upon my heart—let death upon despair!"

He ceased, and overcome leant back awhile;
Then rising, with a melancholy smile,
Went to a sofa, and lay down, and slept
A heavy sleep; and in his dreams he wept,
And muttered some familiar name, and we
Wept without shame in his society.
I think I never was impressed so much:
The man who were not must have lacked a touch
Of human nature.
Then we lingered not,
Although our argument was quite forgot;
But, calling the attendants, went to dine
At Maddalo's. Yet neither cheer nor wine
Could give us spirits; for we talked of him,
And nothing else, till daylight made stars dim.
And we agreed it was some dreadful ill
Wrought on him boldly, yet unspeakable,
By a dear friend; some deadly change in love
Of one vowed deeply (which he dreamed not of),
For whose sake he, it seemed, had fixed a blot
Of falsehood in his mind, which flourished not
But in the light of all-beholding truth;
And, having stamped this canker on his youth,
She had abandoned him. And how much more
Might be his woe we guessed not. He had store
Of friends and fortune once, as we could guess
From his nice habits and his gentleness:
These now were lost—it were a grief indeed
If he had changed one unsustaining reed
For all that such a man might else adorn.
The colours of his mind seemed yet unworn;
For the wild language of his grief was high—

Such as in measure were called poetry.
And I remember one remark which then
Maddalo made: he said—"Most wretched men
Are cradled into poetry by wrong:
They learn in suffering what they teach in song."

If I had been an unconnected man,
I, from this moment, should have formed some plan
Never to leave sweet Venice. For to me
It was delight to ride by the lone sea:
And then the town is silent—one may write
Or read in gondolas, by day or night,
Having the little brazen lamp alight,
Unseen, uninterrupted. Books are there,
Pictures, and casts from all those statues fair
Which were twin-born with poetry, and all
We seek in towns, with little to recall
Regret for the green country. I might sit
In Maddalo's great palace, and his wit
And subtle talk would cheer the winter night,
And make me know myself: and the fire-light
Would flash upon our faces, till the day
Might dawn, and make me wonder at my stay.
But I had friends in London too. The chief
Attraction here was that I sought relief
From the deep tenderness that maniac wrought
Within me. . . . 'Twas perhaps an idle thought,
But I imagined that—if day by day
I watched him, and seldom went away,
And studied all the beatings of his heart
With zeal (as men study some stubborn art
For their own good), and could by patience find
An entrance to the caverns of his mind—
I might reclaim him from his dark estate.
In friendships I had been most fortunate;
Yet never saw I one whom I would call
More willingly my friend.—And this was all
Accomplished not. Such dreams of baseless good
Oft come and go, in crowds or solitude,
And leave no trace: but what I now designed
Made, for long years, impression on my mind.—
The following morning, urged by my affairs,
I left bright Venice.

After many years
And many changes, I returned. The name
Of Venice, and its aspect, was the same.
But Maddalo was travelling, far away,
Among the mountains of Armenia:
His dog was dead: his child had now become
A woman, such as it has been my doom
To meet with few; a wonder of this earth,
Where there is little of transcendent worth,—
Like one of Shakspeare's women. Kindly she,
And with a manner beyond courtesy,
Received her father's friend; and, when I asked
Of the lorn maniac, she her memory tasked,
And told, as she had heard, the mournful tale:—
That the poor sufferer's health began to fail
Two years from my departure; but that then
The lady who had left him came again.
"Her mien had been imperious, but she now
Looked meek; perhaps remorse had brought her low.
Her coming made him better; and they stayed
Together at my father's—(for I played,
As I remember, with the lady's shawl;
I might be six years old).—But, after all,
She left him."
"Why, her heart must have been tough!
How did it end?"
"And was not this enough?
They met, they parted."
"Child, is there no more?"

"Something within that interval which bore
The stamp of *why* they parted, *how* they met.—
Yet, if thine aged eyes disdain to wet
Those wrinkled cheeks with youth's remembered tears,
Ask me no more; but let the silent years
Be closed and cered over their memory,—
As yon mute marble where their corpses lie."

I urged and questioned still. She told me how
All happened—But the cold world shall not know.

NOTE ON JULIAN AND MADDALO, BY MRS. SHELLEY.

FROM the Baths of Lucca, in 1818, Shelley visited Venice; and, circumstances rendering it eligible that we should remain a few weeks in the neighbourhood of that city, he accepted the offer of Lord Byron, who lent him the use of a villa he rented near Este; and he sent for his family from Lucca to join him.

I Capuccini was a villa built on the site of a Capuchin convent, demolished when the French suppressed religious houses; it was situated on the very overhanging brow of a low hill at the foot of a range of higher ones. The house was cheerful and pleasant; a vine-trellised walk (a *pergola*, as it is called in Italian) led from the hall door to a summer-house at the end of the garden, which Shelley made his study, and in which he began the *Prometheus;* and here also, as he mentions in a letter, he wrote *Julian and Maddalo.* A slight ravine, with a road in its depth, divided the garden from the hill, on which stood the ruins of the ancient castle of Este, whose dark massive wall gave forth an echo, and from whose ruined crevices owls and bats flitted forth at night, as the crescent moon sunk behind the black and heavy battlements. We looked from the garden over the wide plain of Lombardy, bounded to the west by the far Apennines, while to the east the horizon was lost in misty distance. After the picturesque but limited view of mountain, ravine, and chesnut wood, at the Baths of Lucca, there was something infinitely gratifying to the eye in the wide range of prospect commanded by our new abode.

Our first misfortune, of the kind from which we soon suffered even more severely, happened here. Our little girl, an infant in whose small features I fancied that I traced great resemblance to her father, showed symptoms of suffering from the heat of the climate. Teething increased her illness and danger. We were at Este, and, when we became alarmed, hastened to Venice for the best advice. When we arrived at Fusina, we found that we had forgotten our passport, and the soldiers on duty attempted to prevent our crossing the laguna; but they could not resist Shelley's impetuosity at such a moment. We had scarcely arrived at Venice before life fled from the little sufferer, and we returned to Este to weep her loss.

After a few weeks spent in this retreat, which were interspersed by visits to Venice, we proceeded southward.

PROMETHEUS UNBOUND:

A LYRICAL DRAMA, IN FOUR ACTS.

Audisne hæc, Amphiarae, sub terram abdite?

PREFACE.

THE Greek tragic writers, in selecting as their subject any portion of their nations. history or mythology, employed in their treatment of it a certain arbitrary discretion. They by no means conceived themselves bound to adhere to the common interpretation, or to imitate in story, as in title, their rivals and predecessors. Such a system would have amounted to a resignation of those claims to preference over their competitors which incited the composition. The Agamemnonian story was exhibited on the Athenian theatre with as many variations as dramas.

I have presumed to employ a similar license. The *Prometheus Unbound* of Æschylus supposed the reconciliation of Jupiter with his victim as the price of the disclosure of the danger threatened to his empire by the consummation of his marriage with Thetis. Thetis, according to this view of the subject, was given in

marriage to Peleus; and Prometheus, by the permission of Jupiter, delivered from his captivity by Hercules. Had I framed my story on this model, I should have done no more than have attempted to restore the lost drama of Æschylus; an ambition which, if my preference to this mode of treating the subject had incited me to cherish, the recollection of the high comparison such an attempt would challenge might well abate. But, in truth, I was averse from a catastrophe so feeble as that of reconciling the Champion with the Oppressor of mankind. The moral interest of the fable, which is so powerfully sustained by the sufferings and endurance of Prometheus, would be annihilated if we could conceive of him as unsaying his high language, and quailing before his successful and perfidious adversary. The only imaginary being resembling in any degree Prometheus is Satan: and Prometheus is, in my judgment, a more poetical character than Satan, because, in addition to courage, and majesty, and firm and patient opposition to omnipotent force, he is susceptible of being described as exempt from the taints of ambition, envy, revenge, and a desire for personal aggrandizement, which, in the Hero of *Paradise Lost*, interfere with the interest. The character of Satan engenders in the mind a pernicious casuistry, which leads us to weigh his faults with his wrongs, and to excuse the former because the latter exceed all measure. In the minds of those who consider that magnificent fiction with a religious feeling, it engenders something worse. But Prometheus is, as it were, the type of the highest perfection of moral and intellectual nature, impelled by the purest and the truest motives to the best and noblest ends.

This poem was chiefly written upon the mountainous ruins of the Baths of Caracalla, among the flowery glades, and thickets of odoriferous blossoming trees, which are extending in ever-winding labyrinths upon its immense platforms and dizzy arches suspended in the air. The bright blue sky of Rome, and the effect of the vigorous awakening of Spring in that divinest climate, and the new life with which it drenches the spirits even to intoxication, were the inspiration of this drama.

The imagery which I have employed will be found, in many instances, to have been drawn from the operations of the human mind, or from those external actions by which they are expressed. This is unusual in modern poetry, although Dante and Shakspeare are full of instances of the same kind: Dante indeed more than any other poet, and with greater success. But the Greek poets, as writers to whom no resource of awakening the sympathy of their contemporaries was unknown, were in the habitual use of this power; and it is the study of their works (since a higher merit would probably be denied me) to which I am willing that my readers should impute this singularity.

One word is due in candour to the degree in which the study of contemporary writings may have tinged my composition; for such has been a topic of censure with regard to poems far more popular, and indeed more deservedly popular, than mine. It is impossible that any one who inhabits the same age with such writers as those who stand in the foremost ranks of our own can conscientiously assure himself that his language and tone of thought may not have been modified by the study of the productions of those extraordinary intellects. It is true that, not the spirit of their genius, but the forms in which it has manifested itself are due less to the peculiarities of their own minds than to the peculiarity of the moral and intellectual condition of the minds among which they have been produced. Thus a number of writers possess the form, whilst they want the spirit, of those whom, it is alleged, they imitate: because the former is the endowment of the age in which they live, and the latter must be the uncommunicated lightning of their own mind.

The peculiar style of intense and comprehensive imagery which distinguishes the modern literature of England has not been, as a general power, the product of the imitation of any particular writer. The mass of capabilities remains at every period materially the same; the circumstances which awaken it to action perpetually

change. If England were divided into forty republics, each equal in population and extent to Athens, there is no reason to suppose but that, under institutions not more perfect than those of Athens, each would produce philosophers and poets equal to those who (if we except Shakspeare) have never been surpassed. We owe the great writers of the golden age of our literature to that fervid awakening of the public mind which shook to dust the oldest and most oppressive form of the Christian religion. We owe Milton to the progress and development of the same spirit: the sacred Milton was, let it ever be remembered, a republican, and a bold enquirer into morals and religion. The great writers of our own age are, we have reason to suppose, the companions and forerunners of some unimagined change in our social condition, or the opinions which cement it. The cloud of mind is discharging its collected lightning, and the equilibrium between institutions and opinions is now restoring, or is about to be restored.

As to imitation, poetry is a mimetic art. It creates, but it creates by combination and representation. Poetical abstractions are beautiful and new, not because the portions of which they are composed had no previous existence in the mind of man or in nature, but because the whole produced by their combination has some intelligible and beautiful analogy with those sources of emotion and thought, and with the contemporary condition of them: one great poet is a masterpiece of nature which another not only ought to study, but *must* study. He might as wisely and as easily determine that his mind should no longer be the mirror of all that is lovely in the visible universe as exclude from his contemplation the beautiful which exists in the writings of a great contemporary. The pretence of doing it would be a presumption in any but the greatest; the effect, even in him, would be strained, unnatural, and ineffectual. A poet is the combined product of such internal powers as modify the nature of others, and of such external influences as excite and sustain these powers: he is not one, but both. Every man's mind is, in this respect, modified by all the objects of nature and art; by every word and every suggestion which he ever admitted to act upon his consciousness; it is the mirror upon which all forms are reflected, and in which they compose one form. Poets—not otherwise than philosophers, painters, sculptors, and musicians—are, in one sense, the creators, and, in another, the creations, of their age. From this subjection the loftiest do not escape. There is a similarity between Homer and Hesiod, between Æschylus and Euripides, between Virgil and Horace, between Dante and Petrarch, between Shakspeare and Fletcher, between Dryden and Pope; each has a generic resemblance under which the specific distinctions are arranged. If this similarity be the result of imitation, I am willing to confess that I have imitated.

Let this opportunity be conceded to me of acknowledging that I have what a Scotch philosopher characteristically terms "a passion for reforming the world:" what passion incited him to write and publish his book he omits to explain. For my part, I had rather be damned with Plato and Lord Bacon than go to heaven with Paley and Malthus. But it is a mistake to suppose that I dedicate my poetical compositions solely to the direct enforcement of reform, or that I consider them in any degree as containing a reasoned system on the theory of human life. Didactic poetry is my abhorrence; nothing can be equally well expressed in prose that is not tedious and supererogatory in verse. My purpose has hitherto been simply to familiarize the highly refined imagination of the more select classes of poetical readers with beautiful idealisms of moral excellence; aware that, until the mind can love, and admire, and trust, and hope, and endure, reasoned principles of moral conduct are seeds cast upon the highway of life, which the unconscious passenger tramples into dust although they would bear the harvest of his happiness. Should I live to accomplish what I propose—that is, produce a systematical history of what appear to me to be the genuine elements of human society—let not the advocates of injustice and superstition flatter themselves that I should take Æschylus rather than Plato as my model.

The having spoken of myself with unaffected freedom will need little apology with the candid; and let the uncandid consider that they injure me less than their own hearts and minds by misrepresentation. Whatever talents a person may possess to amuse and instruct others, be they ever so inconsiderable, he is yet bound to exert them. If his attempt be ineffectual, let the punishment of an unaccomplished purpose have been sufficient; let none trouble themselves to heap the dust of oblivion upon his efforts; the pile they raise will betray his grave, which might otherwise have been unknown.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

PROMETHEUS.
DEMOGORGON.
JUPITER.
The EARTH.
OCEAN.
APOLLO.
MERCURY.
HERCULES.

ASIA, } *Oceanides.*
PANTHEA, }
IONE, }
The PHANTASM OF JUPITER.
The SPIRIT OF THE EARTH.
The SPIRIT OF THE MOON.
SPIRITS OF THE HOURS.
SPIRITS. ECHOES. FAUNS.
FURIES.

ACT I.

SCENE—*A Ravine of Icy Rocks in the Indian Caucasus.* PROMETHEUS *is discovered bound to the Precipice.* PANTHEA *and* IONE *are seated at his feet. Time, Night. During the Scene, Morning slowly breaks.*

Prometheus. Monarch of Gods and Dæmons, and all Spirits—
But One—who throng those bright and rolling worlds
Which thou and I alone of living things
Behold with sleepless eyes! regard this earth
Made multitudinous with thy slaves, whom thou
Requitest for knee-worship, prayer, and praise,
And toil, and hecatombs of broken hearts,
With fear and self-contempt and barren hope:
Whilst me who am thy foe, eyeless in hate
Hast thou made reign and triumph, to thy scorn,
O'er mine own misery and thy vain revenge.
Three thousand years of sleep-unsheltered hours,
And moments aye divided by keen pangs
Till they seemed years, torture and solitude,
Scorn and despair—these are mine empire:—
More glorious far than that which thou surveyest
From thine unenvied throne, O Mighty God!
Almighty, had I deigned to share the shame
Of thine ill tyranny, and hung not here

Nailed to this wall of eagle-baffling mountain,
Black, wintry, dead, unmeasured; without herb,
Insect, or beast, or shape or sound of life.
Ah me! alas! pain, pain, ever, for ever!

No change, no pause, no hope! Yet I endure.
I ask the Earth, have not the mountains felt?
I ask yon Heaven, the all-beholding Sun,
Has it not seen? The Sea, in storm or calm,
Heaven's ever-changing shadow spread below,
Have its deaf waves not heard my agony?
Ah me! alas! pain, pain, ever, for ever!

The crawling glaciers pierce me with the spears
Of their moon-freezing crystals; the bright chains
Eat with their burning cold into my bones;
Heaven's wingèd hound, polluting from thy lips
His beak in poison not his own, tears up
My heart; and shapeless sights come wandering by,
The ghastly people of the realm of dream,
Mocking me: and the Earthquake-fiends are charged
To wrench the rivets from my quivering wounds
When the rocks split and close again behind:
While from their loud abysses howling throng
The Genii of the Storm, urging the rage
Of whirlwind, and afflict me with keen hail.
And yet to me welcome is day and night;
Whether one breaks the hoar-frost of the morn,
Or, starry, dim, and slow, the other climbs
The leaden-coloured east; for then they lead
The wingless crawling Hours, one among whom
—As some dark priest hales the reluctant victim—
Shall drag thee, cruel King, to kiss the blood
From these pale feet, which then might trample thee
If they disdained not such a prostrate slave.
Disdain! Ah no! I pity thee. What ruin
Will hunt thee undefended through the wide heaven!
How will thy soul, cloven to its depth with terror,
Gape like a hell within! I speak in grief,
Not exultation; for I hate no more,
As then ere misery made me wise. The curse
Once breathed on thee I would recall. Ye Mountains,
Whose many-voicèd Echoes through the mist

Of cataracts flung the thunder of that spell!
Ye icy Springs, stagnant with wrinkling frost,
Which vibrated to hear me, and then crept
Shuddering through India! thou serenest Air,
Through which the Sun walks burning without beams!
And ye swift Whirlwinds who on poisèd wings
Hung mute and moveless o'er yon hushed abyss,
As thunder, louder than your own, made rock
The orbèd world! if then my words had power,—
Though I am changed so that aught evil wish
Is dead within, although no memory be
Of what is hate,—let them not lose it now!
What was that curse? for ye all heard me speak.

FIRST VOICE, *from the Mountains.*

Thrice three hundred thousand years
O'er the Earthquake's couch we stood:
Oft, as men convulsed with fears,
We trembled in our multitude:—

SECOND VOICE, *from the Springs.*

Thunderbolts had parched our water,
We had been stained with bitter blood,
And had run mute, 'mid shrieks of slaughter,
Through a city and a solitude:—

THIRD VOICE, *from the Air.*

I had clothed since Earth uprose
Its wastes in colours not their own;
And oft had my serene repose
Been cloven by many a rending groan:—

FOURTH VOICE, *from the Whirlwinds.*

We had soared beneath these mountains
Unresting ages; nor had thunder,
Nor yon volcano's flaming fountains,
Nor any power above or under,
Ever made us mute with wonder:—

FIRST VOICE.

But never bowed our snowy crest
As at the voice of thine unrest.

SECOND VOICE.

Never such a sound before
To the Indian waves we bore.
A pilot asleep on the howling sea
Leaped up from the deck in agony,

And heard, and cried "Ah! woe is me!"
And died as mad as the wild waves be.

THIRD VOICE.

By such dread words from Earth to Heaven
My still realm was never riven:
When its wound was closed, there stood
Darkness o'er the day like blood.

FOURTH VOICE.

And we shrank back: for dreams of ruin
To frozen caves our flight pursuing
Made us keep silence—thus—and thus—
Though silence is a hell to us.

The Earth. The tongueless Caverns of the craggy hills
Cried "Misery!" then; the hollow Heaven replied
"Misery!" and the Ocean's purple waves,
Climbing the land, howled to the lashing winds,
And the pale nations heard it, "Misery!"

Prometheus. I hear a sound of voices: not the voice
Which I gave forth. Mother, thy sons and thou
Scorn him without whose all-enduring will
Beneath the fierce omnipotence of Jove
Both they and thou had vanished, like thin mist
Unrolled on the morning wind. Know ye not me,
The Titan? he who made his agony
The barrier to your else all-conquering Foe?
O rock-embosomed lawns and snow-fed streams,
Now seen athwart frore vapours, deep below,
Through whose o'ershadowing woods I wandered once
With Asia, drinking life from her loved eyes;
Why scorns the spirit which informs ye now
To commune with me? me alone who checked,
As one who checks a fiend-drawn charioteer,
The falsehood and the force of him who reigns
Supreme, and with the groans of pining slaves
Fills your dim glens and liquid wildernesses.
Why answer ye not, still, Brethren?

The Earth. They dare not.

Prometheus. Who dares? for I would hear that curse again.—
Ha! what an awful whisper rises up!
'Tis scarce like sound: it tingles through the frame
As lightning tingles, hovering ere it strike.

Speak, Spirit! From thine inorganic voice,
I only know that thou art moving near,
And love. How cursed I him?
The Earth. How canst thou hear,
Who knowest not the language of the dead?
Prometheus. Thou art a living spirit; speak as they.
The Earth. I dare not speak like life, lest heaven's fell King
Should hear, and link me to some wheel of pain
More torturing than the one whereon I roll.
Subtle thou art and good; and, though the Gods
Hear not this voice, yet thou art more than God,
Being wise and kind: earnestly hearken now.
Prometheus. Obscurely through my brain, like shadows dim,
Sweep awful thoughts, rapid and thick. I feel
Faint, like one mingled in entwining love;
Yet 'tis not pleasure.
The Earth. No, thou canst not hear:
Thou art immortal, and this tongue is known
Only to those who die.
Prometheus. And what art thou,
O melancholy Voice?
The Earth. I am the Earth,
Thy mother; she within whose stony veins, —
To the last fibre of the loftiest tree
Whose thin leaves trembled in the frozen air,
Joy ran, as blood within a living frame,
When thou didst from her bosom like a cloud
Of glory arise,—a spirit of keen joy!
And at thy voice her pining sons uplifted
Their prostrate brows from the polluting dust;
And our almighty Tyrant with fierce dread
Grew pale,—until his thunder chained thee here.
Then,—see those million worlds which burn and roll
Around us—their inhabitants beheld
My spherèd light wane in wide heaven; the sea
Was lifted by strange tempest, and new fire
From earthquake-rifted mountains of bright snow
Shook its portentous hair beneath heaven's frown;
Lightning and inundation vexed the plains;
Blue thistles bloomed in cities, foodless toads
Within voluptuous chambers panting crawled,
When Plague had fallen on man and beast and worm,

And Famine; and black blight on herb and tree;
And in the corn and vines and meadow-grass
Teemed ineradicable poisonous weeds,
Draining their growth,—for my wan breast was dry
With grief; and the thin air, my breath, was stained
With the contagion of a mother's hate
Breathed on her child's destroyer. Ay, I heard
Thy curse, the which, if thou rememberest not,
Yet my innumerable seas and streams,
Mountains and caves and winds, and yon wide air,
And the inarticulate people of the dead,
Preserve, a treasured spell. We meditate
In secret joy and hope those dreadful words,
But dare not speak them.

Prometheus. Venerable Mother!
All else who live and suffer take from thee
Some comfort; flowers and fruits and happy sounds,
And love, though fleeting: these may not be mine.
But mine own words, I pray, deny me not.

The Earth. They shall be told. Ere Babylon was dust,
The Magus Zoroaster, my dead child,
Met his own image walking in the garden:
That apparition, sole of men, he saw.
For know, there are two worlds of life and death:—
One, that which thou beholdest; but the other
Is underneath the grave, where do inhabit
The shadows of all forms that think and live,
Till death unite them and they part no more;
Dreams and the light imaginings of men,
And all that faith creates or love desires,
Terrible, strange, sublime, and beauteous shapes.
There thou art, and dost hang, a writhing shade,
'Mid whirlwind-peopled mountains. All the Gods
Are there; and all the Powers of nameless worlds—
Vast, sceptred phantoms; heroes, men, and beasts;
And Demogorgon, a tremendous gloom;
And he, the Supreme Tyrant, on his throne
Of burning gold. Son, one of these shall utter
The curse which all remember. Call at will
Thine own ghost, or the ghost of Jupiter,
Hades or Typhon, or what mightier Gods
From all-prolific Evil, since thy ruin,

Have sprung, and trampled on my prostrate sons.
Ask, and they must reply: so the revenge
Of the Supreme may sweep through vacant shades,
As rainy wind through the abandoned gate
Of a fallen palace.

Prometheus. Mother, let not aught
Of that which may be evil pass again
My lips, or those of aught resembling me.
Phantasm of Jupiter, arise, appear!

IONE.

My wings are folded o'er mine ears:
My wings are crossèd o'er mine eyes:
Yet through their silver shade appears,
And through their lulling plumes arise,
A Shape, a throng of sounds.
May it be no ill to thee
O thou of many wounds,
Near whom, for our sweet Sister's sake,
Ever thus we watch and wake!

PANTHEA.

The sound is of whirlwind underground,
Earthquake, and fire, and mountains cloven!
The shape is awful like the sound,
Clothed in dark purple, star-inwoven.
A sceptre of pale gold,
To stay steps proud o'er the slow cloud,
His veinèd hand doth hold.
Cruel he looks, but calm and strong,
Like one who does, not suffers, wrong.

Phantasm of Jupiter. Why have the secret powers of this strange world
Driven me, a frail and empty phantom, hither
On direst storms? What unaccustomed sounds
Are hovering on my lips, unlike the voice
With which our pallid race hold ghastly talk
In darkness? And, proud sufferer, who art thou?

Prometheus. Tremendous Image! as thou art must be
He whom thou shadowest forth. I am his foe,
The Titan. Speak the words which I would hear,
Although no thought inform thine empty voice.

The Earth. Listen! and, though your echoes must be mute,
Grey mountains, and old woods, and haunted springs,

Prophetic caves, and isle-surrounding streams,
Rejoice to hear what yet ye cannot speak!

Phantasm. A spirit seizes me and speaks within:
It tears me as fire tears a thunder-cloud.

Panthea. See how he lifts his mighty looks! the heaven
Darkens above!

Ione. He speaks! Oh shelter me!

Prometheus. I see the curse, on gestures proud and cold,
And looks of firm defiance and calm hate,
And such despair as mocks itself with smiles,
Written as on a scroll. Yet speak! Oh speak!

PHANTASM.

"Fiend, I defy thee! with a calm fixed mind,
All that thou canst inflict I bid thee do;
Foul Tyrant both of Gods and Humankind,
One only being shalt thou not subdue!
Rain then thy plagues upon me here,
Ghastly disease and frenzying fear;
And let alternate frost and fire
Eat into me, and be thine ire
Lightning, and cutting hail, and legioned forms
Of Furies driving by upon the wounding storms.

"Ay, do thy worst! Thou art omnipotent.
O'er all things but thyself I gave thee power,
And my own will. Be thy swift mischiefs sent
To blast mankind from yon etherial tower.
Let thy malignant spirit move
In darkness over those I love:
On me and mine I imprecate
The utmost torture of thy hate;
And thus devote to sleepless agony
This undeclining head while thou must reign on high.

"But thou, who art the God and Lord! Oh thou
Who fillest with thy soul this world of woe,
To whom all things of earth and heaven do bow
In fear and worship, all-prevailing foe!
I curse thee! Let a sufferer's curse
Clasp thee, his torturer, like remorse!
Till thine infinity shall be
A robe of envenomed agony;

And thine omnipotence a crown of pain,
To cling like burning gold round thy dissolving brain!

"Heap on thy soul, by virtue of this curse,
Ill deeds: then be thou damned, beholding good
Both infinite as is the universe,
And thou, and thy self-torturing solitude!
An awful image of calm Power
Though now thou sittest, let the hour
Come when thou must appear to be
That which thou art internally:
And, after many a false and fruitless crime,
Scorn track thy lagging fall through boundless space and time!"

Prometheus. Were these my words, O Parent?
The Earth. They were thine.
Prometheus. It doth repent me: words are quick and vain:
Grief for awhile is blind, and so was mine.
I wish no living thing to suffer pain.
The Earth. Misery, oh misery to me,
That Jove at length should vanquish thee!
Wail, howl aloud, Land and Sea,—
The Earth's rent heart shall answer ye!
Howl, Spirits of the living and the dead!
Your refuge, your defence, lies fallen and vanquishèd!

FIRST ECHO.
Lies fallen and vanquishèd?

SECOND ECHO.
Fallen and vanquishèd!

IONE.
Fear not: 'tis but some passing spasm,—
The Titan is unvanquished still.—
But see where through the azure chasm
Of yon forked and snowy hill,
Trampling the slant winds on high
With golden-sandalled feet that glow
Under plumes of purple dye
Like rose-ensanguined ivory,
A Shape comes now,
Stretching on high from his right hand
A serpent-cinctured wand.

Panthea. 'Tis Jove's world-wandering herald, Mercury.

IONE.

And who are those with hydra tresses
And iron wings that climb the wind,
Whom the frowning God represses,—
Like vapours steaming up behind,
Clanging loud, an endless crowd?

PANTHEA.

These are Jove's tempest-walking hounds,
Whom he gluts with groans and blood
When, charioted on sulphurous cloud,
He bursts heaven's bounds.

IONE.

Are they now led from the thin dead,
On new pangs to be fed?

Panthea. The Titan looks, as ever, firm, not proud.

First Fury. Ha! I scent life!

Second Fury. Let me but look into his eyes!

Third Fury. The hope of torturing him smells like a heap
Of corpses to a death-bird after battle!

First Fury. Darest thou delay, O Herald! Take cheer, Hounds
Of Hell! What if the Son of Maia soon
Should make us food and sport?—Who can please long
The Omnipotent?

Mercury. Back to your towers of iron,
And gnash beside the streams of fire, and wail
Your foodless teeth!—Geryon, arise! and Gorgon,
Chimæra, and thou Sphinx, subtlest of fiends,
Who ministered to Thebes heaven's poisoned wine—
Unnatural love, and more unnatural hate!—
These shall perform your task.

First Fury. Oh! mercy! mercy!
We die with our desire: drive us not back!

Mercury. Crouch then in silence.
Awful Sufferer!
To thee unwilling, most unwillingly
I come, by the Great Father's will driven down,
To execute a doom of new revenge.
Alas! I pity thee, and hate myself
That I can do no more. Aye from thy sight
Returning, for a season heaven seems hell,
So thy worn form pursues me night and day,

Smiling reproach, Wise art thou, firm, and good,
But vainly wouldst stand forth alone in strife
Against the Omnipotent; as yon clear lamps
That measure and divide the weary years,
From which there is no refuge, long have taught,
And long must teach. Even now thy torturer arms
With the strange might of unimagined pains
The powers who scheme slow agonies in hell;
And my commission is to lead them here,
Or what more subtle, foul, or savage fiends
People the abyss, and leave them to their task.
Be it not so! There is a secret known
To thee, and to none else of living things,
Which may transfer the sceptre of wide heaven,
The fear of which perplexes the Supreme;—
Clothe it in words, and bid it clasp his throne
In intercession; bend thy soul in prayer,
And, like a suppliant in some gorgeous fane,
Let the will kneel within thy haughty heart:
For benefits and meek submission tame
The fiercest and the mightiest.

Prometheus. Evil minds
Change good to their own nature. I gave all
He has; and in return he chains me here,
Years, ages, night and day; whether the sun
Split my parched skin, or in the moony night
The crystal-winged snow cling round my hair;
Whilst my beloved race is trampled down
By his thought-executing ministers.
Such is the Tyrant's recompense. 'Tis just:
He who is evil can receive no good;
And for a world bestowed or a friend lost
He can feel hate, fear, shame; not gratitude.
He but requites me for his own misdeed.
Kindness to such is keen reproach, which breaks
With bitter stings the light sleep of Revenge.
Submission thou dost know I cannot try;
For what submission but that fatal word,
The death-seal of mankind's captivity,
Like the Sicilian's hair-suspended sword
Which trembles o'er his crown, would he accept,
Or could I yield? Which yet I will not yield.

Let others flatter Crime where it sits throned
In brief omnipotence! Secure are they:
For Justice, when triumphant, will weep down
Pity, not punishment, on her own wrongs,
Too much avenged by those who err. I wait,
Enduring thus, the retributive hour
Which since we spake is even nearer now.
But hark, the Hell-hounds clamour. Fear delay!
Behold! heaven lours under thy father's frown!

Mercury. Oh that we might be spared—I to inflict,
And thou to suffer! Once more answer me:
Thou knowest not the period of Jove's power?

Prometheus. I know but this, that it must come.

Mercury. Alas!
Thou canst not count thy years to come of pain!

Prometheus. They last while Jove must reign; nor more nor less
Do I desire or fear.

Mercury. Yet pause, and plunge
Into eternity, where recorded time—
Even all that we imagine, age on age—
Seems but a point, and the reluctant mind
Flags wearily in its unending flight,
Till it sink, dizzy, blind, lost, shelterless.
Perchance it has not numbered the slow years
Which thou must spend in torture, unreprieved?

Prometheus. Perchance no thought can count them. Yet they pass.

Mercury. If thou mightst dwell among the Gods the while,
Lapped in voluptuous joy?

Prometheus. I would not quit
This bleak ravine, these unrepentant pains.

Mercury. Alas! I wonder at, yet pity thee.

Prometheus. Pity the self-despising slaves of Heaven,—
Not me, within whose mind sits peace serene,
As light in the sun, throned. How vain is talk!
Call up the fiends.

Ione. O sister, look! White fire
Has cloven to the roots yon huge snow-loaded cedar!
How fearfully God's thunder howls behind!

Mercury. I must obey his words and thine: alas!
Most heavily remorse hangs at my heart!

Panthea. See where the Child of Heaven, with winged feet,
Runs down the slanted sunlight of the dawn.
Ione. Dear sister, close thy plumes over thine eyes,
Lest thou behold and die. They come, they come,
Blackening the birth of day with countless wings,
And hollow underneath like death!
First Fury. Prometheus!
Second Fury. Immortal Titan!
Third Fury. Champion of Heaven's slaves!
Prometheus. He whom some dreadful voice invokes is here,
Prometheus, the chained Titan. Horrible forms,
What and who are ye? Never yet there came
Phantasms so foul through monster-teeming hell
From the all-miscreative brain of Jove.
Whilst I behold such execrable shapes,
Methinks I grow like what I contemplate,
And laugh and stare in loathsome sympathy.
First Fury. We are the ministers of pain and fear,
And disappointment and mistrust and hate,
And clinging crime; and, as lean dogs pursue
Through wood and lake some struck and sobbing fawn,
We track all things that weep and bleed and live,
When the great King betrays them to our will.
Prometheus. O many fearful natures in one name!
I know ye; and these lakes and echoes know
The darkness and the clangour of your wings.
But why more hideous than your loathèd selves
Gather ye up in legions from the deep?
Second Fury. We knew not that. Sisters, rejoice, rejoice!
Prometheus. Can aught exult in its deformity?
Second Fury. The beauty of delight makes lovers glad,
Gazing on one another: so are we.
As from the rose which the pale priestess kneels
To gather for her festal crown of flowers
The aërial crimson falls, flushing her cheek,
So from our victim's destined agony
The shade which is our form invests us round,—
Else we are shapeless as our mother Night.
Prometheus. I laugh your power, and his who sent you here,
To lowest scorn. Pour forth the cup of pain.
First Fury. Thou thinkest we will rend thee bone from bone,
And nerve from nerve, working like fire within?

Prometheus. Pain is my element, as hate is thine.
Ye rend me now: I care not.
Second Fury. Dost imagine
We will but laugh into thy lidless eyes?
Prometheus. I weigh not what ye do, but what ye suffer,
Being evil. Cruel was the power which called
You, or aught else so wretched, into light.
Third Fury. Thou think'st we will live through thee, one by one,
Like animal life; and, though we can obscure not
The soul which burns within, that we will dwell
Beside it, like a vain loud multitude
Vexing the self-content of wisest men;
That we will be dread thought beneath thy brain,
And foul desire round thine astonished heart,
And blood within thy labyrinthine veins
Crawling like agony.
Prometheus. Why, ye are thus now:—
Yet am I king over myself, and rule
The torturing and conflicting throngs within,
As Jove rules you when Hell grows mutinous.

CHORUS OF FURIES.

From the ends of the earth, from the ends of the earth,
Where the night has its grave and the morning its birth,
Come, come, come!
O ye who shake hills with the scream of your mirth
When cities sink howling in ruin! and ye
Who with wingless footsteps trample the sea,
And close upon Shipwreck and Famine's track
Sit chattering with joy on the foodless wreck,
Come, come, come!
Leave the bed, low, cold, and red,
Strewed beneath a nation dead;
Leave the hatred, as in ashes
Fire is left for future burning—
It will burst in bloodier flashes
When ye stir it, soon returning:
Leave the self-contempt implanted
In young spirits, sense-enchanted,
Misery's yet unkindled fuel:
Leave Hell's secrets half unchanted
To the maniac dreamer,—cruel,

More than ye can be with hate,
Is he with fear.
Come, come, come!
We are steaming up from hell's wide gate,
And we burthen the blasts of the atmosphere,
But vainly we toil till ye come here!

Ione. Sister, I hear the thunder of new wings.

Panthea. These solid mountains quiver with the sound,
Even as the tremulous air: their shadows make
The space within my plumes more black than night.

FOURTH FURY.

Your call was as a wingèd car
Driven on whirlwinds fast and far;
It rapt us from red gulfs of war;

FIFTH FURY.

From wide cities famine-wasted;

SIXTH FURY.

Groans half heard, and blood untasted;

SEVENTH FURY.

Kingly conclaves, stern and cold,
Where blood with gold is bought and sold;

EIGHTH FURY.

From the furnace, white and hot,
In which—

A FURY.

Speak not, whisper not!
I know all that ye would tell,—
But to speak might break the spell
Which must bend the Invincible,
The stern of thought;
He yet defies the deepest power of Hell.

A FURY.

Tear the veil!

ANOTHER FURY.

It is torn.

CHORUS.

The pale stars of the morn
Shine on a misery dire to be borne.
Dost thou faint, mighty Titan? We laugh thee to scorn!
Dost thou boast the clear knowledge thou wakened'st for man?
Then was kindled within him a thirst which outran
Those perishing waters; a thirst of fierce fever,
Hope, love, doubt, desire, which consume him for ever.

One came forth of gentle worth,
Smiling on the sanguine earth:
His words outlived him, like swift poison
Withering up truth, peace, and pity.
Look! where round the wide horizon
Many a million-peopled city
Vomits smoke in the bright air!
Mark that outcry of despair!
'Tis his mild and gentle ghost
Wailing for the faith he kindled.
Look again! the flames almost
To a glow-worm's lamp have dwindled:
The survivors round the embers
Gather in dread.
Joy, joy, joy!
Past ages crowd on thee, but each one remembers;
And the future is dark, and the present is spread
Like a pillow of thorns for thy slumberless head!

SEMICHORUS I.

Drops of bloody agony flow
From his white and quivering brow.
Grant a little respite now.
See! a disenchanted nation
Springs like day from desolation;
To Truth its state is dedicate,
And Freedom leads it forth, her mate;—
A legioned band of linkèd brothers,
Whom Love calls children—

SEMICHORUS II.

'Tis another's!
See how kindred murder kin!
'Tis the vintage-time for Death and Sin.
Blood, like new wine, bubbles within:
Till despair smothers
The struggling world, which slaves and tyrants win.

[*All the* FURIES *vanish, except one.*

Ione. Hark, sister! what a low yet dreadful groan,
Quite unsuppressed, is tearing up the heart
Of the good Titan, as storms tear the deep,
And beasts hear the sea moan in inland caves!
Darest thou observe how the fiends torture him?

Panthea. Alas! I looked forth twice, but will no more.

Ione. What didst thou see?

Panthea. A woful sight: a youth
With patient looks nailed to a crucifix.
Ione. What next?
Panthea. The heaven around, the earth below,
Was peopled with thick shapes of human death,
All horrible, and wrought by human hands:
And some appeared the work of human hearts,
For men were slowly killed by frowns and smiles.
And other sights too foul to speak and live
Were wandering by. Let us not tempt worse fear
By looking forth: those groans are grief enough.
Fury. Behold an emblem: those who do endure
Deep wrongs for man, and scorn, and chains, but heap
Thousandfold torment on themselves and him.
Prometheus. Remit the anguish of that lighted stare;
Close those wan lips; let that thorn-wounded brow
Stream not with blood; it mingles with thy tears!
Fix, fix those tortured orbs in peace and death,—
So thy sick throes shake not that crucifix,
So those pale fingers play not with thy gore!
Oh horrible! Thy name I will not speak,
It hath become a curse! I see, I see
The wise, the mild, the lofty, and the just,
Whom thy slaves hate for being like to thee,
Some hunted by foul lies from their heart's home,
An early-chosen, late-lamented home,—
As hooded ounces cling to the driven hind;
Some linked to corpses in unwholesome cells;
Some—hear I not the multitude laugh loud?—
Impaled in lingering fire: and mighty realms
Float by my feet, like sea-uprooted isles,
Whose sons are kneaded down in common blood
By the red light of their own burning homes.
Fury. Blood thou canst see, and fire; and canst hear groans:—
Worse things, unheard, unseen, remain behind.
Prometheus. Worse?
Fury. In each human heart terror survives
The ravin it has gorged. The loftiest fear
All that they would disdain to think were true:
Hypocrisy and Custom make their minds
The fanes of many a worship now outworn.
They dare not devise good for man's estate,

And yet they know not that they do not dare.
The good want power but to weep barren tears:
The powerful goodness want,—worse need for them:
The wise want love: and those who love want wisdom:
And all best things are thus confused to ill.
Many are strong and rich, and would be just,
But live among their suffering fellow-men
As if none felt: they know not what they do.
Prometheus. Thy words are like a cloud of winged snakes;
And yet I pity those they torture not.
Fury. Thou pitiest them? I speak no more! [*Vanishes.*
Prometheus. Ah woe!
Ah woe! Alas! pain, pain, ever, for ever!
I close my tearless eyes, but see more clear
Thy works within my woe-illumined mind,
Thou subtle Tyrant! Peace is in the grave:
The grave hides all things beautiful and good.
I am a God, and cannot find it *there*,
Nor would I seek it: for, though dread revenge,
This is defeat, fierce king! not victory.
The sights with which thou torturest gird my soul
With new endurance, till the hour arrives
When they shall be no types of things which are.
Panthea. Alas! what sawest thou?
Prometheus. There are two woes:
To speak, and to behold:—thou spare me one.
Names are there, Nature's sacred watchwords: they
Were borne aloft in bright emblazonry;
The nations thronged around, and cried aloud,
As with one voice, "Truth, Liberty, and Love!"
Suddenly fierce confusion fell from heaven
Among them: there was strife, deceit, and fear:
Tyrants rushed in, and did divide the spoil.
This was the shadow of the truth I saw.
The Earth. I felt thy torture, son, with such mixed joy
As pain and virtue give. To cheer thy state,
I bid ascend those subtle and fair Spirits
Whose homes are the dim caves of human thought,
And who inhabit, as birds wing the wind,
Its world-surrounding ether. They behold
Beyond that twilight realm, as in a glass,
The future: may they speak comfort to thee!

Panthea. Look, sister, where a troop of Spirits gather,
Like flocks of clouds in Spring's delightful weather
Thronging in the blue air!
Ione. And see! more come,
Like fountain-vapours when the winds are dumb,
That climb up the ravine in scattered lines.
And hark! is it the music of the pines?
Is it the lake? is it the waterfall?
Panthea. 'Tis something sadder, sweeter, far than all.

CHORUS OF SPIRITS OF THE MIND.

From unremembered ages we
Gentle guides and guardians be
Of Heaven-oppressed Mortality.
And we breathe, and sicken not,
The atmosphere of human thought:
Be it dim and dank and grey,
Like a storm-extinguished day
Travelled o'er by dying gleams;
Be it bright as all between
Cloudless skies and windless streams,
Silent, liquid, and serene.
As the birds within the wind,
As the fish within the wave,
As the thoughts of man's own mind
Float through all above the grave:
We make there our liquid lair,
Voyaging cloudlike and unpent
Through the boundless element.
Thence we bear the prophecy
Which begins and ends in thee!

Ione. More yet come, one by one: the air around them
Looks radiant as the air around a star.

FIRST SPIRIT.

On a battle-trumpet's blast
I fled hither, fast, fast, fast,
'Mid the darkness upward cast.
From the dust of creeds outworn,
From the tyrant's banner torn,
Gathering round me, onward borne,
There was mingled many a cry—
"Freedom! Hope! Death! Victory!"
Till they faded through the sky.

And one sound, above, around,
One sound, beneath, around, above,
Was moving; 'twas the soul of Love;
'Twas the hope, the prophecy,
Which begins and ends in thee.

SECOND SPIRIT.

A rainbow's arch stood on the sea
Which rocked beneath, immovably;
And the triumphant storm did flee
(Like a conqueror, swift and proud)
Between,—with many a captive cloud,
A shapeless, dark, and rapid crowd,
Each by lightning riven in half.
I heard the thunder hoarsely laugh:
Mighty fleets were strewn like chaff,
And spread beneath, a hell of death,
O'er the white waters. I alit
On a great ship lightning-split;
And speeded hither on the sigh
Of one who gave an enemy
His plank, then plunged aside to die.

THIRD SPIRIT.

I sate beside a sage's bed,
And the lamp was burning red
Near the book where he had fed;
When a Dream with plumes of flame
To his pillow hovering came.
And I knew it was the same
Which had kindled long ago
Pity, eloquence, and woe;
And the world awhile below
Wore the shade its lustre made.
It has borne me here as fleet
As Desire's lightning feet:
I must ride it back ere morrow,
Or the sage will wake in sorrow.

FOURTH SPIRIT.

On a poet's lips I slept,
Dreaming like a love-adept
In the sound his breathing kept.
Nor seeks nor finds he mortal blisses,
But feeds on the aërial kisses

Of shapes that haunt thought's wildernesses.
He will watch from dawn to gloom
The lake-reflected sun illume
The yellow bees in the ivy-bloom,
Nor heed nor see what things they be:
But from these create he can
Forms more real than living man,
Nurslings of immortality.
One of these awakened me,
And I sped to succour thee.

Ione. Behold'st thou not two shapes from the east and west
Come? as two doves to one beloved nest,
Twin nurslings of the all-sustaining air,
On swift still wings glide down the atmosphere.
And hark! their sweet sad voices! 'tis despair
Mingled with love, and then dissolved in sound.

Panthea. Canst thou speak, sister? all my words are drowned.

Ione. Their beauty gives me voice. See how they float
On their sustaining wings of skiey grain,
Orange and azure deepening into gold:
Their soft smiles light the air like a star's fire.

CHORUS OF SPIRITS.

Hast thou beheld the form of Love?

FIFTH SPIRIT.

As over wide dominions
I sped, like some swift cloud that wings the wide air's wildernesses,
That planet-crested shape swept by on lightning-braided pinions,
Scattering the liquid joy of life from his ambrosial tresses:
His footsteps paved the world with light. But, as I passed, 'twas fading,
And hollow ruin yawned behind: great sages bound in madness,
And headless patriots, and pale youths who perished unupbraiding,
Gleamed in the night. I wandered o'er, till thou, O King of Sadness,
Turn'st by thy smile the worst I saw to recollected gladness.

SIXTH SPIRIT.

Ah Sister! Desolation is a delicate thing:
It walks not on the earth, it floats not on the air,
But treads with silent footstep, and fans with silent wing,

The tender hopes which in their hearts the best and gentlest bear;
Who, soothed to false repose by the fanning plumes above,
And the music-stirring motion of its soft and busy feet,
Dream visions of aërial joy, and call the monster Love,
And wake, and find the shadow Pain, as he whom now we greet.

CHORUS.

Though Ruin now Love's shadow be
Following him destroyingly
On Death's white and wingèd steed
Which the fleetest cannot flee,
Trampling down both flower and weed,
Man and beast, and foul and fair,
Like a tempest through the air;
Thou shalt quell this horseman grim,
Woundless though in heart or limb.

PROMETHEUS.

Spirits! how know ye this shall be?

CHORUS.

In the atmosphere we breathe,
(As buds grow red when the snow-storms flee
From Spring gathering up beneath,
Whose mild winds shake the elder-brake,
And the wandering herdsmen know
That the white-thorn soon will blow)
Wisdom, Justice, Love, and Peace,
When they struggle to increase,
Are to us as soft winds be
To shepherd boys, the prophecy
Which begins and ends in thee.

Ione. Where are the Spirits fled?
Panthea. Only a sense
Remains of them; like the omnipotence
Of music when the inspired voice and lute
Languish, ere yet the responses are mute
Which through the deep and labyrinthine soul,
Like echoes through long caverns, wind and roll.
Prometheus. How fair these air-born shapes! And yet I feel
Most vain all hope but love! And thou art far,
Asia! who, when my being overflowed,
Wert like a golden chalice to bright wine
Which else had sunk into the thirsty dust.

All things are still. Alas! how heavily
This quiet morning weighs upon my heart!
Though I should dream I could even sleep with grief,
If slumber were denied not. I would fain
Be what it is my destiny to be,
The saviour and the strength of suffering man,
Or sink into the original gulf of things.
There is no agony and no solace left;
Earth can console, Heaven can torment, no more.

Panthea. Hast thou forgotten one who watches thee
The cold dark night, and never sleeps but when
The shadow of thy spirit falls on her?

Prometheus. I said all hope was vain but love: thou lovest.

Panthea. Deeply in truth. But the eastern star looks white,
And Asia waits in that far Indian vale,
The scene of her sad exile; rugged once
And desolate and frozen, like this ravine;
But now invested with fair flowers and herbs,
And haunted by sweet airs and sounds which flow
Among the woods and waters, from the ether
Of her transforming presence, which would fade
If it were mingled not with thine. Farewell!

ACT. II.

SCENE I.—*Morning. A lonely Vale in the Indian Caucasus.*

ASIA, *alone.*

Asia. From all the blasts of heaven thou hast descended!
Yes, like a spirit, like a thought which makes
Unwonted tears throng to the horny eyes,
And beatings haunt the desolated heart
Which should have learnt repose, thou hast descended,
Cradled in tempests; thou dost wake, O Spring!
O child of many winds! As suddenly
Thou comest as the memory of a dream
Which now is sad because it hath been sweet;
Like genius, or like joy, which riseth up
As from the earth, clothing with golden clouds
The desert of our life.—

This is the season, this the day, the hour;
At sunrise thou shouldst come, sweet Sister mine;
Too long desired, too long delaying, come!
How like death-worms the wingless moments crawl!
The point of one white star is quivering still
Deep in the orange light of widening morn
Beyond the purple mountains: through a chasm
Of wind-divided mist the darker lake
Reflects it. Now it wanes: it gleams again
As the waves fade, and as the burning threads
Of woven cloud unravel in pale air.
'Tis lost! and through yon peaks of cloud-like snow
The roseate sunlight quivers. Hear I not
The Æolian music of her sea-green plumes
Winnowing the crimson dawn? [PANTHEA *enters.*
I feel, I see,
Those eyes which burn through smiles that fade in tears,
Like stars half-quenched in mists of silver dew.
Beloved and most beautiful, who wearest
The shadow of that soul by which I live,
How late thou art! the spherèd sun had climbed
The sea; my heart was sick with hope, before
The printless air felt thy belated plumes.

Panthea. Pardon, great Sister! but my wings were faint
With the delight of a remembered dream,
As are the noontide plumes of summer winds
Satiate with sweet flowers. I was wont to sleep
Peacefully, and awake refreshed and calm,
Before the sacred Titan's fall, and thy
Unhappy love, had made, through use and pity,
Both love and woe familiar to my heart,
As they had grown to thine. Erewhile I slept
Under the glaucous caverns of old Ocean
Within dim bowers of green and purple moss,—
Our young Ione's soft and milky arms
Locked then, as now, behind my dark moist hair,
While my shut eyes and cheek were pressed within
The folded depth of her life-breathing bosom:
But not as now,—since I am made the wind
Which fails beneath the music that I bear
Of thy most wordless converse; since, dissolved
Into the sense with which love talks, my rest

Was troubled and yet sweet, my waking hours
Too full of care and pain.
Asia. Lift up thine eyes,
And let me read thy dream.
Panthea. As I have said,
With our Sea-sister at his feet I slept.
The mountain mists, condensing at our voice
Under the moon, had spread their snowy flakes,
From the keen ice shielding our linkèd sleep.
Then two dreams came. One I remember not.
But in the other his pale wound-worn limbs
Fell from Prometheus; and the azure night
Grew radiant with the glory of that form
Which lives unchanged within; and his voice fell
Like music which makes giddy the dim brain,
Faint with intoxication of keen joy:
"Sister of her whose footsteps pave the world
With loveliness—more fair than aught but her,
Whose shadow thou art—lift thine eyes on me."
I lifted them. The overpowering light
Of that immortal shape was shadowed o'er
By love; which from his soft and flowing limbs,
And passion-parted lips, and keen faint eyes,
Steamed forth like vaporous fire; an atmosphere
Which wrapped me in its all-dissolving power,
As the warm ether of the morning sun
Wraps ere it drinks some cloud of wandering dew.
I saw not, heard not, moved not; only felt
His presence flow and mingle through my blood,
Till it became his life, and his grew mine.
And I was thus absorbed,—until it passed;
And, like the vapours, when the sun sinks down,
Gathering again in drops upon the pines,
And tremulous as they, in the deep night
My being was condensed; and, as the rays
Of thought were slowly gathered, I could hear
His voice, whose accents lingered ere they died
Like footsteps of weak melody. Thy name,
Among the many sounds, alone I heard,
Of what might be articulate; though still
I listened through the night when sound was none.
Ione wakened then, and said to me:

"Canst thou divine what troubles me to-night?
I always knew what I desired before,
Nor ever found delight to wish in vain.
But now I cannot tell thee what I seek:
I know not; something sweet, since it is sweet
Even to desire. It is thy sport, false sister;
Thou hast discovered some enchantment old,
Whose spells have stolen my spirit as I slept,
And mingled it with thine: for, when just now
We kissed, I felt within thy parted lips
The sweet air that sustained me, and the warmth
Of the life-blood, for loss of which I faint,
Quivered between our intertwining arms."
I answered not, for the eastern star grew pale,
But fled to thee.

Asia. Thou speakest, but thy words
Are as the air: I feel them not. Oh! lift
Thine eyes, that I may read his written soul!

Panthea. I lift them, though they droop beneath the load
Of that they would express: what canst thou see
But thine own fairest shadow imaged there?

Asia. Thine eyes are like the deep, blue, boundless heaven
Contracted to two circles underneath
Their long fine lashes; dark, far, measureless,
Orb within orb and line through line inwoven.

Panthea. Why lookest thou as if a spirit passed?

Asia. There is a change; beyond their inmost depth
I see a shade, a shape: 'tis He, arrayed
In the soft light of his own smiles, which spread
Like radiance from the cloud-surrounded morn!
Prometheus, it is thine! Depart not yet!
Say not those smiles that we shall meet again
Within that bright pavilion which their beams
Shall build on the waste world? The dream is told! . . .
What shape is that between us? Its rude hair
Roughens the wind that lifts it, its regard
Is wild and quick; yet 'tis a thing of air,
For through its grey robe gleams the golden dew
Whose stars the noon has quenched not.

Dream. Follow! Follow!

Panthea. It is mine other dream.

Asia. It disappears.

Panthea. It passes now into my mind. Methought,
As we sate here, the flower-enfolding buds
Burst on yon lightning-blasted almond tree,
When swift from the white Scythian wilderness
A wind swept forth wrinkling the earth with frost.
I looked, and all the blossoms were blown down;
But on each leaf was stamped, as the blue bells
Of hyacinth tell Apollo's written grief,
"Oh follow, follow!"

Asia. As you speak, your words
Fill, pause by pause, my own forgotten sleep
With shapes. Methought among the lawns together
We wandered, underneath the young grey dawn,
And multitudes of dense white fleecy clouds
Were wandering in thick flocks along the mountains,
Shepherded by the slow unwilling wind;
And the white dew on the new-bladed grass,
Just piercing the dark earth, hung silently.
And there was more which I remember not:
But on the shadows of the morning clouds,
Athwart the purple mountain slope, was written
"Follow, oh follow!" As they vanished by,
And on each herb, from which heaven's dew had fallen,
The like was stamped as with a withering fire,
A wind arose among the pines; it shook
The clinging music from their boughs, and then
Low, sweet, faint sounds, like the farewell of ghosts,
Were heard: "Oh follow, follow, follow me!"
And then I said, "Panthea, look on me:"
But in the depth of those beloved eyes
Still I saw "follow, follow!"

Echo. Follow, follow!

Panthea. The crags, this clear Spring morning, mock our voices,
As they were spirit-tongued.

Asia. It is some being
Around the crags. What fine clear sounds! Oh list!

ECHOES (*unseen*).

Echoes we! Listen!
We cannot stay:
As dew-stars glisten,
Then fade away—
Child of Ocean!

Asia. Hark! Spirits speak! The liquid responses
Of their aërial tongues yet sound.
Panthea. I hear.

ECHOES.

Oh follow, follow!
As our voice recedeth,
Through the caverns hollow—
Where the forest spreadeth—
(*More distant.*)
Oh follow, follow,
Through the caverns hollow.
As the song floats thou pursue,
Where the wild bee never flew;
Through the noontide darkness deep,
By the odour-breathing sleep
Of faint night-flowers, and the waves
At the fountain-lighted caves;
While our music wild and sweet
Mocks thy gently falling feet,
Child of Ocean!

Asia. Shall we pursue the sound? It grows more faint
And distant.
Panthea. List! the strain floats nearer now.

ECHOES.

In the world unknown
Sleeps a voice unspoken;
By thy step alone
Can its rest be broken,
Child of Ocean!

Asia. How the notes sink upon the ebbing wind!

ECHOES.

Oh follow, follow,
Through the caverns hollow!
As the song floats thou pursue;
By the woodland noontide dew,
By the forests, lakes, and fountains,
Through the many-folded mountains,—
To the rents, and gulfs, and chasms,
Where the Earth reposed from spasms
On the day when He and Thou

Parted, to commingle now;
Child of Ocean!

Asia. Come, sweet Panthea, link thy hand in mine,
And follow, ere the voices fade away.

SCENE II.—*A Forest, intermingled with Rocks and Caverns.* ASIA *and* PANTHEA *pass into it. Two young Fauns are sitting on a Rock, listening.*

SEMICHORUS I. OF SPIRITS.

The path through which that lovely twain
Have passed, by cedar, pine, and yew,
And each dark tree that ever grew,
Is curtained out from heaven's wide blue.
Nor sun nor moon nor wind nor rain
Can pierce its interwoven bowers;
Nor aught save where some cloud of dew,
Drifted along the earth-creeping breeze
Between the trunks of the hoar trees,
Hangs each a pearl in the pale flowers
Of the green laurel blown anew,
And bends, and then fades silently,
One frail and fair anemone.
Or, when some star, of many a one
That climbs and wanders through steep night,
Has found the cleft through which alone
Beams fall from high those depths upon,—
Ere it is borne away, away,
By the swift heavens that cannot stay,—
It scatters drops of golden light,
Like lines of rain that ne'er unite:
And the gloom divine is all around,
And underneath is the mossy ground.

SEMICHORUS II.

There the voluptuous nightingales
Are awake through all the broad noonday.
When one with bliss or sadness fails,
And through the windless ivy-boughs,
Sick with sweet love, droops dying away
On its mate's music-panting bosom;
Another, from the swinging blossom
Watching to catch the languid close
Of the last strain, then lifts on high

The wings of the weak melody,—
Till some new strain of feeling bear
The song, and all the woods are mute;
When there is heard through the dim air
The rush of wings, and, rising there
Like many a lake-surrounded flute,
Sounds overflow the listener's brain
So sweet that joy is almost pain.

SEMICHORUS I.

There those enchanted eddies play
Of Echoes music-tongued which draw,
By Demogorgon's mighty law,
With melting rapture or sweet awe,
All spirits on that secret way;
As inland boats are driven to ocean
Down streams made strong with mountain-thaw.
And first there comes a gentle sound
To those in talk or slumber bound,
And wakes the destined soft emotion,
Attracts, impels them. Those who saw
Say from the breathing earth behind
There streams a plume-uplifting wind
Which drives them on their path, while they
Believe their own swift wings and feet
The sweet desires within obey.
And so they float upon their way,
Until, still sweet but loud and strong,
The storm of sound is driven along,
Sucked up and hurrying: as they fleet
Behind, its gathering billows meet,
And to the fatal mountain bear
Like clouds amid the yielding air.

First Faun. Canst thou imagine where those spirits live
Which make such delicate music in the woods?
We haunt within the least frequented caves
And closest coverts, and we know these wilds,
Yet never meet them, though we hear them oft:
Where may they hide themselves?

Second Faun. 'Tis hard to tell.
I have heard those more skilled in spirits say,
The bubbles, which the enchantment of the sun
Sucks from the pale faint water-flowers that pave

The oozy bottom of clear lakes and pools,
Are the pavilions where such dwell and float
Under the green and golden atmosphere
Which noontide kindles through the woven leaves;
And, when these burst, and the thin fiery air,
The which they breathed within those lucent domes,
Ascends to flow like meteors through the night,
They ride on them, and rein their headlong speed,
And bow their burning crests, and glide in fire
Under the waters of the earth again.

First Faun. If such live thus, have others other lives,
Under pink blossoms, or within the bells
Of meadow flowers or folded violets deep,
Or on their dying odours when they die,
Or on the sunlight of the spherèd dew?

Second Faun. Ay, many more which we may well divine.—
But, should we stay to speak, noontide would come,
And thwart Silenus find his goats undrawn,
And grudge to sing those wise and lovely songs
Of Fate, and Chance, and God, and Chaos old,
And Love and the chained Titan's woful doom,
And how he shall be loosed, and make the earth
One brotherhood: delightful strains which cheer
Our solitary twilights, and which charm
To silence the unenvying nightingales.

SCENE III.—*A Pinnacle of Rock among Mountains.* ASIA *and* PANTHEA.

Panthea. Hither the sound has borne us—to the realm
Of Demogorgon, and the mighty portal,
Like a volcano's meteor-breathing chasm,
Whence the oracular vapour is hurled up
Which lonely men drink wandering in their youth,
And call truth, virtue, love, genius, or joy—
That maddening wine of life whose dregs they drain
To deep intoxication, and uplift,
Like Mænads who cry loud "Evoe! Evoe!"
The voice which is contagion to the world.

Asia. Fit throne for such a Power! Magnificent!
How glorious art thou, Earth! And if thou be
The shadow of some Spirit lovelier still,—
Though evil stain its work, and it should be

Like its creation, weak yet beautiful,—
I could fall down and worship that and thee.
Even now my heart adoreth. Wonderful!
Look, Sister, ere the vapour dim thy brain.
Beneath is a wide plain of billowy mist,
As a lake, paving, in the morning sky,
With azure waves which burst in silver light,
Some Indian vale. Behold it rolling on
Under the curdling winds, and islanding
The peak whereon we stand; midway, around,
Encinctured by the dark and blooming forests,
Dim twilight lawns, and stream-illumined caves,
And wind-enchanted shapes of wandering mist;
And far on high the keen sky-cleaving mountains
From icy spires of sunlike radiance fling
The dawn, as lifted ocean's dazzling spray,
From some Atlantic islet scattered up,
Spangles the wind with lamp-like water-drops.
The vale is girdled with their walls: a howl
Of cataracts from their thaw-cloven ravines
Satiates the listening wind, continuous, vast,
Awful as silence. Hark! the rushing snow!
The sun-awakened avalanche! whose mass,
Thrice sifted by the storm, had gathered there
Flake after flake,—in heaven-defying minds
As thought by thought is piled, till some great truth
Is loosened, and the nations echo round,
Shaken to their roots, as do the mountains now.

Panthea. Look how the gusty sea of mist is breaking
In crimson foam, even at our feet! it rises
As ocean at the enchantment of the moon
Round foodless men wrecked on some oozy isle.

Asia. The fragments of the cloud are scattered up.
The wind that lifts them disentwines my hair;
Its billows now sweep o'er mine eyes; my brain
Grows dizzy: I see shapes within the mist.

Panthea. A countenance with beckoning smiles: there burns
An azure fire within its golden locks.
Another, and another! hark! they speak!

SONG OF SPIRITS.

To the deep, to the deep,

Down, down!
Through the shade of Sleep,
Through the cloudy strife
Of Death and of Life;
Through the veil and the bar
Of things which seem and are,
Even to the steps of the remotest throne,
Down, down!

While the sound whirls around,
Down, down!—
As the fawn draws the hound;
As the lightning, the vapour;
As a weak moth, the taper;
Death, despair; love, sorrow;
Time, both; to-day, to-morrow;—
As steel obeys the spirit of the stone,
Down, down!

Through the grey void abysm,
Down, down!
Where the air is no prism,
And the moon and stars are not,
And the cavern-crags wear not
The radiance of heaven
Nor the gloom to earth given,—
Where there is One pervading, One alone,—
Down, down!

In the depth of the deep,
Down, down!
Like veiled lightning asleep,
Like the spark nursed in embers,
The last look Love remembers,
Like a diamond which shines
On the dark wealth of mines,
A spell is treasured but for thee alone.
Down, down!

We have bound thee, we guide thee
Down, down,
With the bright form beside thee.
Resist not the weakness!
Such strength is in meekness

That the Eternal, the Immortal,
Must unloose through life's portal
The snake-like Doom coiled underneath his throne,
By that alone.

SCENE IV.—*The Cave of* DEMOGORGON. ASIA *and* PANTHEA.

Panthea. What veilèd Form sits on that ebon throne?
Asia. The veil has fallen.
Panthea. I see a mighty Darkness
Filling the seat of power; and rays of gloom
Dart round, as light from the meridian sun,
Ungazed-upon and shapeless. Neither limb,
Nor form, nor outline; yet we feel it is
A living Spirit.
Demogorgon. Ask what thou wouldst know.
Asia. What canst thou tell?
Demogorgon. All things thou dar'st demand.
Asia. Who made the living world?
Demogorgon. God.
Asia. Who made all
That it contains? thought, passion, reason, will,
Imagination?
Demogorgon. God: Almighty God.
Asia. Who made that sense which, at the winds of Spring
In rarest visitation, or the voice
Of one belovèd heard in youth alone,
Fills the faint eyes with falling tears which dim
The radiant looks of unbewailing flowers,—
And leaves this peopled earth a solitude
When it returns no more?
Demogorgon. Merciful God.
Asia. And who made terror, madness, crime, remorse,
Which, from the links of the great chain of things
To every thought within the mind of man,
Sway and drag heavily, and each one reels
Under the load towards the pit of death;
Abandoned hope, and love that turns to hate;
And self-contempt, bitterer to drink than blood;
Pain, whose unheeded and familiar speech
Is howling and keen shrieks day after day;
And Hell, or the sharp fear of Hell?
Demogorgon. He reigns.

Asia. Utter his name! A world pining in pain
Asks but his name: curses shall drag him down!
Demogorgon. He reigns.
Asia. I feel, I know it: who?
Demogorgon. He reigns.
Asia. Who reigns? There was the Heaven and Earth at first,
And Light and Love; then Saturn, from whose throne
Time fell, an envious shadow. Such the state
Of the earth's primal spirits beneath his sway
As the calm joy of flowers and living leaves
Before the wind or sun has withered them,
And semivital worms. But he refused
The birthright of their being, knowledge, power,
The skill which wields the elements, the thought
Which pierces this dim universe like light,
Self-empire, and the majesty of love;
For thirst of which they fainted. Then Prometheus
Gave wisdom, which is strength, to Jupiter,
And, with this law alone "Let man be free,"
Clothed him with the dominion of wide Heaven.
To know nor faith nor love nor law, to be
Omnipotent but friendless, is to reign.
And Jove now reigned; for on the race of Man
First famine, and then toil, and then disease,
Strife, wounds, and ghastly death unseen before,
Fell; and the unseasonable seasons drove,
With alternating shafts of frost and fire,
Their shelterless pale tribes to mountain caves:
And in their desert hearts fierce wants he sent,
And mad disquietudes, and shadows idle
Of unreal good, which levied mutual war,
So ruining the lair wherein they raged.
Prometheus saw, and waked the legioned hopes
Which sleep within folded elysian flowers,
Nepenthe, moly, amaranth, fadeless blooms,
That they might hide with thin and rainbow wings
The shape of Death; and Love he sent to bind
The disunited tendrils of that vine
Which bears the wine of life, the human heart;
And he tamed fire which, like some beast of prey,
Most terrible but lovely, played beneath

The frown of man; and tortured to his will
Iron and gold, the slaves and signs of Power,
And gems and poisons, and all subtlest forms
Hidden beneath the mountains and the waves.
He gave Man speech, and speech created thought,
Which is the measure of the universe;
And science struck the thrones of earth and heaven,
Which shook but fell not; and the harmonious mind
Poured itself forth in all-prophetic song;
And music lifted up the listening spirit,
Until it walked, exempt from mortal care,
Godlike, o'er the clear billows of sweet sound;
And human hands first mimicked and then mocked,
With moulded limbs more lovely than its own,
The human form, till marble grew divine,
And mothers, gazing, drank the love men see
Reflected in their race, behold, and perish.
He told the hidden power of herbs and springs,
And Disease drank and slept. Death grew like sleep.
He taught the implicated orbits woven
Of the wide-wandering Stars; and how the Sun
Changes his lair, and by what secret spell
The pale Moon is transformed, when her broad eye
Gazes not on the interlunar sea.
He taught to rule, as life directs the limbs,
The tempest-wingèd chariots of the Ocean,
And the Celt knew the Indian. Cities then
Were built, and through their snow-like columns flowed
The warm winds, and the azure ether shone,
And the blue sea and shadowy hills were seen.
Such, the alleviations of his state,
Prometheus gave to man: for which he hangs
Withering in destined pain. But who rains down
Evil, the immedicable plague, which, while
Man looks on his creation like a God,
And sees that it is glorious, drives him on,—
The wreck of his own will, the scorn of Earth,
The outcast, the abandoned, the alone?
Not Jove. While yet his frown shook heaven, ay when
His adversary from adamantine chains
Cursed him, he trembled like a slave. Declare
Who is his master? Is he too a slave?

Demogorgon. All spirits are enslaved which serve things evil:
Thou know'st if Jupiter be such or no.
Asia. Whom called'st thou God?
Demogorgon. I spoke but as ye speak,
For Jove is the supreme of living things.
Asia. Who is master of the slave?
Demogorgon. If the abysm
Could vomit forth its secrets. . . . But a voice
Is wanting, the deep truth is imageless;
For what would it avail to bid thee gaze
On the revolving world? what to bid speak
Fate, Time, Occasion, Chance, and Change? To these
All things are subject but eternal Love.
Asia. So much I asked before, and my heart gave
The response thou hast given; and of such truths
Each to itself must be the oracle.
One more demand; and do thou answer me
As my own soul would answer, did it know
That which I ask. Prometheus shall arise
Henceforth the sun of this rejoicing world:
When shall the destined hour arrive?
Demogorgon. Behold!
Asia. The rocks are cloven, and through the purple night
I see cars drawn by rainbow-wingèd steeds
Which trample the dim winds: in each there stands
A wild-eyed charioteer urging their flight.
Some look behind, as fiends pursued them there,
And yet I see no shapes but the keen stars:
Others, with burning eyes, lean forth, and drink
With eager lips the wind of their own speed,
As if the thing they loved fled on before,
And now, even now, they clasped it. Their bright locks
Stream like a comet's flashing hair: they all
Sweep onward.
Demogorgon. These are the immortal Hours,
Of whom thou didst demand. One waits for thee.
Asia. A Spirit with a dreadful countenance
Checks its dark chariot by the craggy gulf.
Unlike thy brethren, ghastly charioteer,
Who art thou? Whither wouldst thou bear me? Speak!
Spirit. I am the shadow of a destiny
More dread than is my aspect. Ere yon planet

Has set, the darkness which ascends with me
Shall wrap in lasting night Heaven's kingless throne.
Asia. What meanest thou?
Panthea. That terrible Shadow floats
Up from its throne, as may the lurid smoke
Of earthquake-ruined cities o'er the sea.
Lo! it ascends the car; the coursers fly
Terrified! Watch its path among the stars,
Blackening the night!
Asia. Thus I am answered: strange!
Panthea. See, near the verge another chariot stays,—
An ivory shell inlaid with crimson fire,
Which comes and goes within its sculptured rim
Of delicate strange tracery. The young Spirit
That guides it has the dove-like eyes of hope.
How its soft smiles attract the soul! as light
Lures wingèd insects through the lampless air.

SPIRIT.

My coursers are fed with the lightning,
They drink of the whirlwind's stream,
And, when the red morn is bright'ning,
They bathe in the fresh sunbeam.
They have strength for their swiftness, I deem;—
Then ascend with me, Daughter of Ocean.

I desire,—and their speed makes night kindle;
I fear,—they outstrip the typhoon;
Ere the cloud piled on Atlas can dwindle
We encircle the earth and the moon.
We shall rest from long labours at noon:—
Then ascend with me, Daughter of Ocean.

SCENE V.—*The Car pauses within a Cloud on the Top of a snowy Mountain.* ASIA, PANTHEA, *and the* SPIRIT OF THE HOUR.

SPIRIT.

On the brink of the night and the morning
My coursers are wont to respire;
But the Earth has just whispered a warning
That their flight must be swifter than fire:
They shall drink the hot speed of desire!
Asia. Thou breathest on their nostrils, but my breath
Would give them swifter speed.

Spirit. Alas! it could not.
Panthea. O Spirit! pause, and tell whence is the light
Which fills the cloud? The sun is yet unrisen.
Spirit. The sun will rise not until noon. Apollo
Is held in heaven by wonder; and the light
Which fills this vapour, as the aërial hue
Of fountain-gazing roses fills the water,
Flows from thy mighty Sister.
Panthea. Yes, I feel—
Asia. What is it with thee, sister? Thou art pale.
Panthea. How thou art changed! I dare not look on thee;
I feel but see thee not. I scarce endure
The radiance of thy beauty. Some good change
Is working in the elements, which suffer
Thy presence thus unveiled. The Nereids tell
That, on the day when the clear hyaline
Was cloven at thy uprise, and thou didst stand
Within a veinèd shell which floated on
Over the calm floor of the crystal sea,
Among the Egean isles and by the shores
Which bear thy name,—Love, like the atmosphere
Of the sun's fire filling the living world,
Burst from thee, and illumined earth and heaven,
And the deep ocean and the sunless caves,
And all that dwells within them; till grief cast
Eclipse upon the soul from which it came.
Such art thou now; nor is it I alone—
Thy sister, thy companion, thine own chosen one,—
But the whole world, which seeks thy sympathy.
Hear'st thou not sounds i' the air which speak the love
Of all articulate beings? Feel'st thou not
The inanimate winds enamoured of thee? List! [*Music.*
Asia. Thy words are sweeter than aught else but his
Whose echoes they are: yet all love is sweet,
Given or returned. Common as light is love,
And its familiar voice wearies not ever.
Like the wide heaven, the all-sustaining air,
It makes the reptile equal to the God.
They who inspire it most are fortunate,
As I am now; but those who feel it most
Are happier still, after long sufferings,—
As I shall soon become.

Panthea. List! Spirits speak.

VOICE *in the air, singing.*

Life of Life! thy lips enkindle
With their love the breath between them;
And thy smiles, before they dwindle,
Make the cold air fire,—then screen them
In those looks where whoso gazes
Faints, entangled in their mazes.

Child of Light! thy limbs are burning
Through the vest which seems to hide them,
As the radiant lines of morning
Through the clouds, ere they divide them;
And this atmosphere divinest
Shrouds thee wheresoe'er thou shinest.

Fair are others; none beholds thee.
But thy voice sounds low and tender,
Like the fairest, for it folds thee
From the sight, that liquid splendour,—
And all feel yet see thee never,
As I feel now, lost for ever!

Lamp of Earth! where'er thou movest,
Its dim shapes are clad with brightness,
And the souls of whom thou lovest
Walk upon the winds with lightness,
Till they fail, as I am failing,
Dizzy, lost, yet unbewailing!

ASIA.

My soul is an enchanted boat,
Which, like a sleeping swan, doth float
Upon the silver waves of thy sweet singing;
And thine doth like an angel sit
Beside the helm conducting it,
Whilst all the winds with melody are ringing.
It seems to float ever, for ever,
Upon that many-winding river,
Between mountains, woods, abysses,
A paradise of wildernesses!
Till, like one in slumber bound
Borne to the ocean, I float down, around,
Into a sea profound of ever-spreading sound.

Meanwhile thy spirit lifts its pinions
In music's most serene dominions,
Catching the winds that fan that happy heaven.
And we sail on, away, afar,
Without a course, without a star,
But by the instinct of sweet music driven;
Till through elysian garden islets,
By thee, most beautiful of pilots,
Where never mortal pinnace glided,
The boat of my desire is guided:
Realms where the air we breathe is love,
Which in the winds and on the waves doth move,
Harmonizing this earth with what we feel above.

We have passed Age's icy caves,
And Manhood's dark and tossing waves,
And Youth's smooth ocean, smiling to betray:
Beyond the glassy gulfs we flee
Of shadow-peopled Infancy,
Through Death and Birth, to a diviner day:—
A paradise of vaulted bowers
Lit by downward-gazing flowers,
And watery paths that wind between
Wildernesses calm and green,
Peopled by shapes too bright to see,
And rest, having beheld,—somewhat like thee,—
Which walk upon the sea, and chant melodiously!

ACT III.

SCENE I.—*Heaven.* JUPITER *on his Throne;* THETIS *and the other Deities assembled.*

Jupiter. Ye congregated Powers of Heaven, who share
The glory and the strength of him ye serve,
Rejoice! henceforth I am Omnipotent.
All else had been subdued to me; alone
The soul of Man, like unextinguished fire,
Yet burns towards heaven with fierce reproach, and doubt,
And lamentation, and reluctant prayer,
Hurling up insurrection, which might make
Our antique empire insecure, though built

On eldest faith, and hell's coeval, fear.
And, though my curses through the pendulous air,
Like snow on herbless peaks, fall flake by flake,
And cling to it; though under my wrath's night
It climb the crags of life step after step,
Which wound it as ice wounds unsandalled feet;
It yet remains supreme o'er misery,
Aspiring, unrepressed :—yet soon to fall.
Even now have I begotten a strange wonder—
That fatal Child, the terror of the earth,
Who waits but till the destined Hour arrive
(Bearing from Demogorgon's vacant throne
The dreadful might of ever-living limbs
Which clothed that awful Spirit unbeheld)
To redescend, and trample out the spark.

Pour forth heaven's wine, Idæan Ganymede,
And let it fill the dædal cups like fire;
And from the flower-inwoven soil divine,
Ye all-triumphant harmonies, arise,
As dew from earth under the twilight stars!
Drink! be the nectar circling through your veins
The soul of joy, ye ever-living Gods,
Till exultation burst in one wide voice,
Like music from elysian winds.
And thou
Ascend beside me, veilèd in the light
Of the desire which makes thee one with me,
Thetis, bright image of Eternity!
When thou didst cry, "Insufferable might!
God! Spare me! I sustain not the quick flames,
The penetrating presence; all my being,
Like him whom the Numidian seps did thaw
Into a dew with poison, is dissolved,
Sinking through its foundations :"—even then
Two mighty Spirits, mingling, made a third
Mightier than either; which, unbodied now,
Between us floats, felt although unbeheld,
Waiting the incarnation which ascends
(Hear ye the thunder of the fiery wheels
Griding the winds?) from Demogorgon's throne.
Victory! victory! Feel'st thou not, O World!

The earthquake of his chariot thundering up
Olympus?

[*The Car of the* HOUR *arrives.* DEMOGORGON *descends, and moves towards the Throne of* JUPITER.

Awful Shape, what art thou? Speak!

Demogorgon. Eternity. Demand no direr name.
Descend, and follow me down the abyss.
I am thy child, as thou wert Saturn's child;
Mightier than thee. And we must dwell together
Henceforth in darkness. Lift thy lightnings not.
The tyranny of Heaven none may retain,
Or reassume, or hold, succeeding thee.
Yet, if thou wilt, as 'tis the destiny
Of trodden worms to writhe till they are dead,
Put forth thy might.

Jupiter. Detested prodigy!
Even thus beneath the deep Titanian prisons
I trample thee!—Thou lingerest? . . .
Mercy! mercy!
No pity, no release, no respite! Oh!
That thou wouldst make mine Enemy my judge,
Even where he hangs, seared by my long revenge,
On Caucasus! *He* would not doom me thus.
Gentle and just and dreadless, is he not
The Monarch of the World? What then art thou?—
No refuge! no appeal!—
Sink with me then!
We two will sink on the wide waves of ruin,
Even as a vulture and a snake outspent
Drop, twisted in inextricable fight,
Into a shoreless sea. Let hell unlock
Its mounded oceans of tempestuous fire,
And whelm on them into the bottomless void
This desolated world, and thee, and me,
The conqueror and the conquered, and the wreck
Of that for which they combated!
Ai! Ai!
The elements obey me not! I sink
Dizzily down, ever, for ever, down!
And, like a cloud, mine Enemy above
Darkens my fall with victory! Ai, Ai!

SCENE II.—*The Mouth of a great River in the Island Atlantis.* OCEAN *is discovered reclining near the Shore;* APOLLO *stands beside him.*

Ocean. He fell, thou say'st, beneath his conqueror's frown?
Apollo. Ay, when the strife was ended which made dim
The orb I rule, and shook the solid stars,
The terrors of his eye illumined heaven
With sanguine light, through the thick ragged skirts
Of the victorious darkness, as he fell:
Like the last glare of day's red agony
Which, from a rent among the fiery clouds,
Burns far along the tempest-wrinkled deep.
Ocean. He sunk to the abyss? to the dark void?
Apollo. An eagle so, caught in some bursting cloud
On Caucasus; his thunder-baffled wings
Entangled in the whirlwind, and his eyes,
Which gazed on the undazzling sun, now blinded
By the white lightning, while the ponderous hail
Beats on his struggling form, which sinks at length
Prone, and the aërial ice clings over it.
Ocean. Henceforth the fields of heaven-reflecting sea
Which are my realm will heave, unstained with blood,
Beneath the uplifting winds, like plains of corn
Swayed by the summer air; my streams will flow
Round many peopled continents, and round
Fortunate isles. And from their glassy thrones
Blue Proteus and his humid Nymphs shall mark
The shadow of fair ships (as mortals see
The floating bark of the light-laden moon,
With that white star, its sightless pilot's crest,
Borne down the rapid sunset's ebbing sea);
Tracking their path no more by blood and groans
And desolation, and the mingled voice
Of slavery and command,—but by the light
Of wave-reflected flowers, and floating odours,
And music soft, and mild, free, gentle voices,
That sweetest music, such as Spirits love.
Apollo. And I shall gaze not on the deeds which make
My mind obscure with sorrow, as eclipse
Darkens the sphere I guide. But list! I hear
The small, clear, silver lute of the young Spirit
That sits i' the Morning Star.

Ocean. Thou must away.
Thy steeds will pause at even,—till when, farewell.
The loud deep calls me home even now, to feed it
With azure calm out of the emerald urns
Which stand for ever full beside my throne.
Behold the Nereids under the green sea—
Their wavering limbs borne on the wind-like stream,
Their white arms lifted o'er their streaming hair,
With garlands pied and starry sea-flower crowns,—
Hastening to grace their mighty Sister's joy.
[*A sound of waves is heard.*
It is the unpastured sea hungering for calm.
Peace, monster; I come now. Farewell.
Apollo. Farewell.

SCENE III.—*Caucasus.* PROMETHEUS, HERCULES, IONE, *the* EARTH, SPIRITS: ASIA *and* PANTHEA *borne in the Car with the* SPIRIT OF THE HOUR.

HERCULES *unbinds* PROMETHEUS, *who descends.*

Hercules. Most glorious among Spirits! thus doth Strength
To Wisdom, Courage, and long-suffering Love,
And thee, who art the form they animate,
Minister like a slave.
Prometheus. Thy gentle words
Are sweeter even than freedom long desired
And long delayed.
Asia, thou light of life,
Shadow of Beauty unbeheld; and ye,
Fair sister Nymphs who made long years of pain
Sweet to remember, through your love and care;
Henceforth we will not part. There is a cave
All overgrown with trailing odorous plants
Which curtain out the day with leaves and flowers;
And paved with veined emerald; and a fountain,
Leaps in the midst with an awakening sound.
From its curved roof the mountain's frozen tears,
Like snow or silver or long diamond spires,
Hang downward, raining forth a doubtful light.
And there is heard the ever-moving air,
Whispering without from tree to tree, and birds,
And bees; and all around are mossy seats,
And the rough walls are clothed with long soft grass:—

A simple dwelling, which shall be our own;
Where we will sit and talk of time and change;
As the world ebbs and flows, ourselves unchanged.
What can hide Man from mutability?—
And, if ye sigh, then I will smile; and thou,
Ione, shalt chant fragments of sea-music,
Until I weep,—when *ye* shall smile away
The tears she brought, which yet were sweet to shed.
We will entangle buds and flowers and beams
Which twinkle on the fountain's brim, and make
Strange combinations out of common things,
Like human babes in their brief innocence.
And we will search, with looks and words of love,
For hidden thoughts each lovelier than the last,
Our unexhausted spirits; and, like lutes
Touched by the skill of the enamoured wind,
Weave harmonies divine, yet ever new,
From difference sweet where discord cannot be.
And hither come, sped on the charmèd winds
Which meet from all the points of heaven (as bees,
From every flower aërial Enna feeds,
At their own island-homes in Himera)
The echoes of the human world, which tell
Of the low voice of Love, almost unheard,
And dove-eyed Pity's murmured pain, and Music,
Itself the echo of the heart, and all
That tempers or improves man's life, now free.
And lovely apparitions, dim at first,
Then radiant,—as the mind, arising bright
From the embrace of beauty (whence the forms
Of which these are the phantoms), casts on them
The gathered rays which are reality,—
Shall visit us; the progeny immortal
Of Painting, Sculpture, and rapt Poesy,
And arts, though unimagined, yet to be.
The wandering voices and the shadows these
Of all that man becomes, the mediators
Of that best worship, love, by him and us
Given and returned; swift shapes and sounds, which grow
More fair and soft as man grows wise and kind,
And, veil by veil, evil and error fall.
Such virtue has the cave and place around.

[*Turning to the* SPIRIT OF THE HOUR.

For thee, fair Spirit, one toil remains. Ione,
Give her that curvèd shell which Proteus old
Made Asia's nuptial boon, breathing within it
A voice to be accomplished, and which thou
Didst hide in grass under the hollow rock.

Ione. Thou most desired Hour, more loved and lovely
Than all thy sisters, this the mystic shell.
See the pale azure fading into silver,
Lining it with a soft yet glowing light:
Looks it not like lulled music sleeping there?

Spirit. It seems in truth the fairest shell of ocean;
Its sound must be at once both sweet and strange.

Prometheus. Go, borne over the cities of mankind
On whirlwind-footed coursers: once again
Outspeed the sun around the orbèd world,
And, as thy chariot cleaves the kindling air,
Thou breathe into the many-folded shell,
Loosening its mighty music; it shall be
As thunder mingled with clear echoes. Then
Return: and thou shalt dwell beside our cave.

And thou, O Mother Earth!—

The Earth. I hear, I feel.
Thy lips are on me, and thy touch runs down
Even to the adamantine central gloom
Along these marble nerves; 'tis life, 'tis joy,—
And, through my withered, old, and icy frame,
The warmth of an immortal youth shoots down
Circling. Henceforth the many children fair
Folded in my sustaining arms; all plants,
And creeping forms, and insects rainbow-winged,
And birds and beasts and fish, and human shapes,
Which drew disease and pain from my wan bosom,
Draining the poison of despair, shall take
And interchange sweet nutriment. To me
Shall they become like sister-antelopes,
By one fair dam, snow-white and swift as wind,
Nursed among lilies near a brimming stream.
The dew-mists of my sunless sleep shall float
Under the stars like balm: night-folded flowers
Shall suck unwithering hues in their repose:
And men and beasts in happy dreams shall gather

Strength for the coming day and all its joy.
And death shall be the last embrace of her
Who takes the life she gave, even as a mother,
Folding her child, says "Leave me not again."

Asia. O mother! wherefore speak the name of death?
Cease they to love and move and breathe and speak
Who die?

The Earth. It would avail not to reply:
Thou art immortal, and this tongue is known
But to the uncommunicating dead.
Death is the veil which those who live call life:
They sleep, and it is lifted. And meanwhile
In mild variety the seasons mild,
With rainbow-skirted showers, and odorous winds,
And long blue meteors cleansing the dull night,
And the life-kindling shafts of the keen sun's
All-piercing bow, and the dew-mingled rain
Of the calm moonbeams, a soft influence mild,
Shall clothe the forests and the fields—ay, even
The crag-built deserts of the barren deep—
With ever-living leaves and fruits and flowers.—
And thou! There is a cavern where my spirit
Was panted forth in anguish whilst thy pain
Made my heart mad. And those that did inhale it
Became mad too; and built a temple there,
And spoke, and were oracular, and lured
The erring nations round to mutual war,
And faithless faith, such as Jove kept with thee.
Which breath now rises, as amongst tall weeds
A violet's exhalation; and it fills
With a serener light and crimson air,
Intense yet soft, the rocks and woods around.
It feeds the quick growth of the serpent vine;
And the dark linkèd ivy tangling wild;
And budding, blown, or odour-faded blooms
Which star the winds with points of coloured light,
As they rain through them; and bright golden globes
Of fruit, suspended in their own green heaven;
And, through their veinèd leaves and amber stems,
The flowers whose purple and translucid bowls
Stand ever mantling with aërial dew,
The drink of spirits. And it circles round,

Like the soft waving wings of noonday dreams,
Inspiring calm and happy thoughts—like mine,
Now thou art thus restored. This cave is thine.
Arise! Appear!

[*A* SPIRIT *rises in the likeness of a winged child.*

This is my torch-bearer;
Who let his lamp out in old time with gazing
On eyes from which he kindled it anew
With love, which is as fire, sweet daughter mine,—
For such is that within thine own.—Run, wayward,
And guide this company beyond the peak
Of Bacchic Nysa, Mænad-haunted mountain,
And beyond Indus and its tribute rivers,
Trampling the torrent streams and glassy lakes
With feet unwet, unwearied, undelaying;
And up the green ravine, across the vale,
Beside the windless and crystalline pool
Where ever lies on unerasing waves
The image of a temple built above,
Distinct with column, arch, and architrave,
And palm-like capital, and over-wrought
And populous most with living imagery,—
Praxitelean shapes whose marble smiles
Fill the hushed air with everlasting love.
It is deserted now; but once it bore
Thy name, Prometheus. There the emulous youths
Bore to thy honour through the divine gloom
The lamp which was thine emblem; even as those
Who bear the untransmitted torch of hope
Into the grave across the night of life,—
As thou hast borne it most triumphantly
To this far goal of time. Depart, farewell.
Beside that temple is the destined cave.

SCENE IV.—*A Forest. In the Background a Cave.* PROMETHEUS, ASIA, PANTHEA, IONE, *and the* SPIRIT OF THE EARTH.

Ione. Sister, it is not earthly! How it glides
Under the leaves! how on its head there burns
A light like a green star, whose emerald beams
Are twined with its fair hair! how, as it moves,
The splendour drops in flakes upon the grass!
Knowest thou it?

Panthea. It is the delicate Spirit
That guides the earth through heaven. From afar
The populous constellations call that light
The loveliest of the planets:—and sometimes
It floats along the spray of the salt sea;
Or makes its chariot of a foggy cloud;
Or walks through fields or cities while men sleep,
Or o'er the mountain tops, or down the rivers,
Or through the green waste wilderness, as now,
Wondering at all it sees. Before Jove reigned,
It loved our sister Asia, and it came
Each leisure hour to drink the liquid light
Out of her eyes, for which it said it thirsted
As one bit by a dipsas; and with her
It made its childish confidence, and told her
All it had known or seen (for it saw much,
Yet idly reasoned what it saw), and called her—
For whence it sprung it knew not, nor do I,—
"Mother, dear mother."

The Spirit of the Earth (running to Asia). Mother, dearest
May I then talk with thee as I was wont? [mother,
May I then hide my eyes in thy soft arms,
After thy looks have made them tired of joy?
May I then play beside thee the long noons,
When work is none in the bright silent air?

Asia. I love thee, gentlest being, and henceforth
Can cherish thee unenvied. Speak, I pray:
Thy simple talk once solaced, now delights.

Spirit of the Earth. Mother, I am grown wiser (though a
Cannot be wise like thee) within this day; [child
And happier too; happier and wiser both.
Thou know'st that toads and snakes and loathly worms,
And venomous and malicious beasts, and boughs
That bore ill berries in the woods, were ever
An hindrance to my walks o'er the green world:
And that, among the haunts of humankind,
Hard-featured men, or with proud angry looks,
Or cold staid gait, or false and hollow smiles,
Or the dull sneer of self-loved ignorance,
Or other such foul masks with which ill thoughts
Hide that fair being whom we Spirits call Man,—
And women too, ugliest of all things evil,

(Though fair, even in a world where thou art fair,
When good and kind, free and sincere, like thee)
When false or frowning,—made me sick at heart
To pass them, though they slept, and I unseen.
Well, my path lately lay through a great city
Into the woody hills surrounding it:
A sentinel was sleeping at the gate:
When there was heard a sound, so loud it shook
The towers amid the moonlight, yet more sweet
Than any voice but thine, sweetest of all;
A long, long sound, as it would never end:
And all the inhabitants leapt suddenly
Out of their rest, and gathered in the streets,
Looking in wonder up to heaven, while yet
The music pealed along. I hid myself
Within a fountain in the public square,
Where I lay like the reflex of the moon
Seen in a wave under green leaves; and soon
Those ugly human shapes and visages,
Of which I spoke as having wrought me pain,
Passed floating through the air, and fading still
Into the winds that scattered them; and those
From whom they passed seemed mild and lovely forms
After some foul disguise had fallen. And all
Were somewhat changed; and, after brief surprise
And greetings of delighted wonder, all
Went to their sleep again. And, when the dawn
Came,—wouldst thou think that toads and snakes and efts
Could e'er be beautiful? yet so they were,—
And that with little change of shape or hue.
All things had put their evil nature off.
I cannot tell my joy when o'er a lake,
Upon a drooping bough with nightshade twined,
I saw two azure halcyons clinging downward,
And thinning one bright bunch of amber berries
With quick long beaks, and in the deep there lay
Those lovely forms imaged as in a sky.
So, with my thoughts full of these happy changes,
We meet again, the happiest change of all.

Asia. And never will we part, till thy chaste Sister,
Who guides the frozen and inconstant moon,
Will look on thy more warm and equal light

Till her heart thaw like flakes of April snow,
And love thee.

Spirit of the Earth. What! as Asia loves Prometheus?

Asia. Peace, wanton! thou art yet not old enough.
Think ye, by gazing on each other's eyes,
To multiply your lovely selves, and fill
With spherèd fires the interlunar air?

Spirit of the Earth. Nay, mother, while my sister trims her lamp
'Tis hard I should go darkling!

Asia. Listen; look!

[*The* SPIRIT OF THE HOUR *enters.*

Prometheus. We feel what thou hast heard and seen: yet speak.

Spirit of the Hour. Soon as the sound had ceased whose thunder filled
The abysses of the sky and the wide earth,
There was a change: the impalpable thin air
And the all-circling sunlight were transformed,
As if the sense of love, dissolved in them,
Had folded itself round the spherèd world.
My vision then grew clear, and I could see
Into the mysteries of the universe.
Dizzy as with delight I floated down,
Winnowing the lightsome air with languid plumes.
My coursers sought their birthplace in the sun:
Where they henceforth will live exempt from toil,
Pasturing flowers of vegetable fire;
And where my moonlike car will stand within
A temple, gazed upon by Phidian forms
Of thee, and Asia, and the Earth, and me,
And you fair Nymphs, looking the love we feel,—
In memory of the tidings it has borne,—
Beneath a dome fretted with graven flowers,
Poised on twelve columns of resplendent stone,
And open to the bright and liquid sky.
Yoked to it by an amphisbænic snake,
The likeness of those wingèd steeds will mock
The flight from which they find repose.—Alas!
Whither has wandered now my partial tongue,
When all remains untold which ye would hear?
As I have said, I floated to the earth:

It was, as it is still, the pain of bliss
To move, to breathe, to be. I wandering went
Among the haunts and dwellings of mankind;
And first was disappointed not to see
Such mighty change as I had felt within,
Expressed in outward things. But soon I looked;
And behold! thrones were kingless, and men walked
One with the other even as spirits do.
None fawned, none trampled; hate, disdain, or fear,
Self-love or self-contempt, on human brows
No more inscribed, as o'er the gate of hell,
"All hope abandon, ye who enter here."
None frowned, none trembled, none with eager fear
Gazed on another's eye of cold command,
Until the subject of a tyrant's will
Became (worse fate!) the abject of his own,
Which spurred him, like an outspent horse, to death.
None wrought his lips in truth-entangling lines
Which smiled the lie his tongue disdained to speak.
None, with firm sneer, trod out in his own heart
The sparks of love and hope; till there remained
Those bitter ashes, a soul self-consumed,
And the wretch crept a vampire among men,
Infecting all with his own hideous ill.
None talked that common, false, cold, hollow talk
Which makes the heart deny the *yes* it breathes,
Yet question that unmeant hypocrisy
With such a self-mistrust as has no name.
And women too, frank, beautiful, and kind
As the free heaven which rains fresh light and dew
On the wide earth, passed—gentle radiant forms,
From custom's evil taint exempt and pure;
Speaking the wisdom once they could not think,
Looking emotions once they feared to feel,
And changed to all which once they dared not be,
Yet, being now, made earth like heaven. Nor pride,
Nor jealousy, nor envy, nor ill-shame,
The bitterest of those drops of treasured gall,
Spoilt the sweet taste of the nepenthe, love.

Thrones, altars, judgment-seats, and prisons,—wherein,
And beside which, by wretched men were borne

Sceptres, tiaras, swords, and chains, and tomes
Of reasoned wrong, glozed on by ignorance,—
Were like those monstrous and barbaric shapes,
The ghosts of a no-more-remembered fame,
Which from their unworn obelisks look forth
In triumph o'er the palaces and tombs
Of those who were their conquerors, mouldering round.
Those imaged, to the pride of kings and priests,
A dark yet mighty faith, a power as wide
As is the world it wasted,—and are now
But an astonishment. Even so the tools
And emblems of its last captivity,
Amid the dwellings of the peopled earth,
Stand, not o'erthrown, but unregarded now.
And those foul shapes, abhorred by God and man,
Which, under many a name and many a form,
Strange, savage, ghastly, dark, and execrable,
Were Jupiter, the Tyrant of the World,—
And which the nations, panic-stricken, served
With blood and hearts broken by long hope, and love
Dragged to his altars soiled and garlandless,
And slain among men's unreclaiming tears,
Flattering the thing they feared, which fear was hate,—
Frown, mouldering fast, o'er their abandoned shrines.
The painted veil—by those who were, called life—
Which mimicked, as with colours idly spread,
All men believed and hoped, is torn aside.
The loathsome mask has fallen. The man remains,—
Sceptreless, free, uncircumscribed, but man:
Equal, unclassed, tribeless, and nationless,
Exempt from awe, worship, degree, the king
Over himself; just, gentle, wise: but man.
Passionless? no:—yet free from guilt or pain,—
Which were, for his will made or suffered them;
Nor yet exempt, though ruling them like slaves,
From chance and death and mutability,—
The clogs of that which else might oversoar
The loftiest star of unascended heaven
Pinnacled dim in the intense inane.

ACT IV.

SCENE.—*A part of the Forest near the Cave of* PROMETHEUS. PANTHEA *and* IONE *are sleeping: they awaken gradually during the first Song.*

VOICE OF UNSEEN SPIRITS.

The pale stars are gone,
For the Sun, their swift shepherd,
To their folds them compelling
In the depths of the dawn,
Hastes in meteor-eclipsing array; and they flee
Beyond his blue dwelling,
As fawns flee the leopard.
But where are ye?

A train of dark Forms and Shadows passes by confusedly, singing.

Here, oh here
We bear the bier
Of the Father of many a cancelled year.
Spectres we
Of the dead Hours be,
We bear Time to his tomb in Eternity.

Strew, oh strew
Hair, not yew!
Wet the dusty pall with tears, not dew!
Be the faded flowers
Of Death's bare bowers
Spread on the corpse of the King of Hours!

Haste, oh haste!
As shades are chased,
Trembling, by day, from heaven's blue waste,
We melt away,
Like dissolving spray,
From the children of a diviner day,
With the lullaby
Of winds that die
On the bosom of their own harmony.

IONE.

What dark forms were they?

PANTHEA.

The past Hours weak and grey,
With the spoil which their toil

Raked together
From the conquest but One could foil.

IONE.

Have they passed?

PANTHEA.

They have passed;
They outspeeded the blast.
While 'tis said, they are fled.

IONE.

Whither, oh! whither?

PANTHEA.

To the dark, to the past, to the dead.

VOICE OF UNSEEN SPIRITS.

Bright clouds float in heaven,
Dew-stars gleam on earth,
Waves assemble on ocean:
They are gathered and driven
By the storm of delight, by the panic of glee!
They shake with emotion,
They dance in their mirth.
But where are ye?

The pine-boughs are singing
Old songs with new gladness,
The billows and fountains
Fresh music are flinging,
Like the notes of a spirit, from land and from sea;
The storms mock the mountains
With the thunder of gladness.
But where are ye?

Ione. What charioteers are these?
Panthea. Where are their chariots?

SEMICHORUS I. OF HOURS.

The voice of the Spirits of Air and of Earth
Has drawn back the figured curtain of sleep,
Which covered our being and darkened our birth
In the deep.

A VOICE.

In the deep?

SEMICHORUS II.

Oh! below the deep.

SEMICHORUS I.

An hundred ages we had been kept
Cradled in visions of hate and care,
And each one who waked as his brother slept
Found the truth—

SEMICHORUS II.

Worse than his visions were!

SEMICHORUS I.

We have heard the lute of Hope in sleep;
We have known the voice of Love in dreams;
We have felt the wand of Power, and leap—

SEMICHORUS II.

As the billows leap in the morning beams.

CHORUS.

Weave the dance on the floor of the breeze,
Pierce with song heaven's silent light,
Enchant the Day, that too swiftly flees,
To check its flight ere the cave of Night.

Once the hungry Hours were hounds
Which chased the Day like a bleeding deer,
And it limped and stumbled with many wounds
Through the nightly dells of the desert year.

But now—oh! weave the mystic measure
Of music and dance and shapes of light!
Let the Hours, and the Spirits of might and pleasure,
Like the clouds and sunbeams, unite.

A VOICE.

Unite.

Panthea. See where the Spirits of the Human Mind,
Wrapped in sweet sounds as in bright veils, approach.

CHORUS OF SPIRITS OF THE MIND.

We join the throng
Of the dance and the song,
By the whirlwind of gladness borne along;
As the flying-fish leap
From the Indian deep,
And mix with the sea-birds half asleep.

CHORUS OF HOURS.

Whence come ye, so wild and so fleet,
For sandals of lightning are on your feet,
And your wings are soft and swift as thought,
And your eyes are as love which is veilèd not?

CHORUS OF SPIRITS OF THE MIND.

We come from the mind
Of humankind,
Which was late so dusk and obscure and blind :—
Now 'tis an ocean
Of clear emotion,
A heaven of serene and mighty motion :—

From that deep abyss
Of wonder and bliss
Whose caverns are crystal palaces ;
From those skiey towers
Where thought's crowned powers
Sit watching your dance, ye happy Hours :—

From the dim recesses
Of woven caresses,
Where lovers catch ye by your loose tresses ;
From the azure isles
Where sweet Wisdom smiles,
Delaying your ships with her siren wiles :—

From the temples high
Of man's ear and eye,
Roofed over sculpture and poesy ;
From the murmurings
Of the unsealed springs
Where Science bedews his dædal wings.

Years after years,
Through blood and tears,
And a thick hell of hatreds and hopes and fears,
We waded and flew,—
And the islets were few
Where the bud-blighted flowers of happiness grew.

Our feet now, every palm,
Are sandalled with calm,
And the dew of our wings is a rain of balm ;
And beyond our eyes
The human love lies
Which makes all it gazes on paradise.

CHORUS OF SPIRITS AND HOURS.

Then weave the web of the mystic measure ;
From the depths of the sky and the ends of the earth,

Come, swift Spirits of might and of pleasure,
Fill the dance and the music of mirth,—
As the waves of a thousand streams rush by
To an ocean of splendour and harmony!

CHORUS OF SPIRITS OF THE MIND.

Our spoil is won,
Our task is done,
We are free to dive, or soar, or run;
Beyond and around,
Or within the bound
Which clips the world with darkness round.

We'll pass the eyes
Of the starry skies
Into the hoar deep to colonize:
Death, Chaos, and Night,
From the sound of our flight
Shall flee, like mist from a tempest's might.

And Earth, Air, and Light,
And the Spirit of Might
Which drives round the stars in their fiery flight,
And Love, Thought, and Breath,
The powers that quell Death,
Wherever we soar shall assemble beneath.

And our singing shall build
In the void's loose field
A world for the Spirit of Wisdom to wield;
We will take our plan
From the new world of man,
And our work shall be called the Promethean.

CHORUS OF HOURS.

Break the dance, and scatter the song;
Let some depart, and some remain.

SEMICHORUS I.

We beyond heaven are driven along:

SEMICHORUS II.

Us the enchantments of earth retain:

SEMICHORUS I.

Ceaseless and rapid and fierce and free,
With the Spirits which build a new earth and sea,
And a heaven where yet heaven could never be.

SEMICHORUS II.

Solemn and slow and serene and bright,
Leading the day, and outspeeding the night,
With the powers of a world of perfect light.

SEMICHORUS I.

We whirl, singing loud, round the gathering sphere,
Till the trees and the beasts and the clouds appear
From its chaos, made calm by love, not fear.

SEMICHORUS II.

We encircle the ocean and mountains of earth,
And the happy forms of its death and birth
Change to the music of our sweet mirth.

CHORUS OF HOURS AND SPIRITS.

Break the dance, and scatter the song;
Let some depart and some remain.
Wherever we fly, we lead along
In leashes like star-beams, soft yet strong,
The clouds that are heavy with love's sweet rain.

Panthea. Ha! they are gone!

Ione. Yet feel you no delight
From the past sweetness?

Panthea. As the bare green hill,
When some soft cloud vanishes into rain,
Laughs with a thousand drops of sunny water
To the unpavilioned sky!

Ione. Even whilst we speak,
New notes arise. What is that awful sound?

Panthea. 'Tis the deep music of the rolling world,
Kindling within the strings of the waved air
Æolian modulations.

Ione. Listen too
How every pause is filled with under-notes,
Clear, silver, icy, keen, awakening tones,
Which pierce the sense, and live within the soul,
As the sharp stars pierce winter's crystal air,
And gaze upon themselves within the sea.

Panthea. But see where, through two openings in the forest
Which hanging branches overcanopy,
And where two runnels of a rivulet
Between the close moss, violet-inwoven,
Have made their path of melody (like sisters
Who part with sighs that they may meet in smiles,

Turning their dear disunion to an isle
Of lovely grief, a wood of sweet sad thoughts),
Two visions of strange radiance float upon
The ocean-like enchantment of strong sound,
Which flows intenser, keener, deeper yet,
Under the ground and through the windless air.

Ione. I see a chariot like that thinnest boat
In which the Mother of the Months is borne
By ebbing night into her western cave,
When she upsprings from interlunar dreams;
O'er which is curved an orblike canopy
Of gentle darkness, and the hills and woods,
Distinctly seen through that dusk airy veil,
Regard like shapes in an enchanter's glass.
Its wheels are solid clouds, azure and gold,
Such as the genii of the thunder-storm
Pile on the floor of the illumined sea
When the sun rushes under it; they roll
And move and grow as with an inward wind.
Within it sits a winged infant. White
Its countenance, like the whiteness of bright snow;
Its plumes are as feathers of sunny frost;
Its limbs gleam white through the wind-flowing folds
Of its white robe, woof of etherial pearl.
Its hair is white, the brightness of white light
Scattered in strings; yet its two eyes are heavens
Of liquid darkness, which the deity
Within seems pouring, as a storm is poured
From jagged clouds, out of their arrowy lashes,
Tempering the cold and radiant air around
With fire that is not brightness. In its hand
It sways a quivering moonbeam, from whose point
A guiding power directs the chariot's prow
Over its wheeled clouds; which, as they roll
Over the grass and flowers and waves, wake sounds
Sweet as a singing rain of silver dew.

Panthea. And from the other opening in the wood
Rushes, with loud and whirlwind harmony,
A sphere which is as many thousand spheres,—
Solid as crystal, yet through all its mass
Flow, as through empty space, music and light:
Ten thousand orbs involving and involved,

Purple and azure, white and green and golden,
Sphere within sphere; and every space between
Peopled with unimaginable shapes,
Such as ghosts dream dwell in the lampless deep,
Yet each inter-transpicuous. And they whirl
Over each other with a thousand motions,
Upon a thousand sightless axles spinning;
And, with the force of self-destroying swiftness,
Intensely, slowly, solemnly, roll on,
Kindling with mingled sounds and many tones
Intelligible words and music wild.
With mighty whirl the multitudinous orb
Grinds the bright brook into an azure mist
Of elemental subtlety, like light;
And the wild odour of the forest flowers,
The music of the living grass and air,
The emerald light of leaf-entangled beams,
Round its intense yet self-conflicting speed
Seem kneaded into one aërial mass
Which drowns the sense. Within the orb itself,
Pillowed upon its alabaster arms,
Like to a child o'erwearied with sweet toil,
On its own folded wings and wavy hair
The Spirit of the Earth is laid asleep;
And you can see its little lips are moving,
Amid the changing light of their own smiles,
Like one who talks of what he loves in dream.

Ione. 'Tis only mocking the orb's harmony.

Panthea. And from a star upon its forehead shoot,
Like swords of azure fire, or golden spears
With tyrant-quelling myrtle overtwined,
Embleming heaven and earth united now,
Vast beams like spokes of some invisible wheel:
Which whirl as the orb whirls, swifter than thought,
Filling the abyss with sun-like lightenings,
And, perpendicular now and now transverse,
Pierce the dark soil, and, as they pierce and pass,
Make bare the secrets of the earth's deep heart;—
Infinite mine of adamant and gold,
Valueless stones and unimagined gems,
And caverns on crystalline columns poised,
With vegetable silver overspread,

Wells of unfathomed fire, and water-springs
Whence the great sea even as a child is fed,
Whose vapours clothe earth's monarch mountain tops
With kingly ermine snow. The beams flash on,
And make appear the melancholy ruins
Of cancelled cycles; anchors, beaks of ships;
Planks turned to marble; quivers, helms, and spears,
And gorgon-headed targes, and the wheels
Of scythèd chariots; and the emblazonry
Of trophies, standards, and armorial beasts,
Round which Death laughed, sepulchred emblems
Of dead destruction, ruin within ruin;—
The wrecks beside of many a city vast,
Whose population, which the earth grew over,
Was mortal, but not human. See, they lie,
Their monstrous works and uncouth skeletons,
Their statues, homes, and fanes; prodigious shapes
Huddled in grey annihilation, split,
Jammed in the hard black deep: and, over these,
The anatomies of unknown wingèd things,
And fishes which were isles of living scale,
And serpents, bony chains twisted around
The iron crags, or within heaps of dust
To which the tortuous strength of their last pangs
Had crushed the iron crags; and, over these,
The jagged alligator, and the might
Of earth-convulsing behemoth, which once
Were monarch beasts, and on the slimy shores
And weed-overgrown continents of earth
Increased and multiplied like summer worms
On an abandoned corpse,—till the blue globe
Wrapped deluge round it like a cloak, and they
Yelled, gasped, and were abolished; or some God
Whose throne was in a comet passed, and cried
"Be not!" and like my words they were no more.

THE EARTH.

The joy, the triumph, the delight, the madness!
The boundless, overflowing, bursting gladness,
The vaporous exultation not to be confined!
Ha! ha! the animation of delight
Which wraps me like an atmosphere of light,
And bears me as a cloud is borne by its own wind!

THE MOON.

Brother mine, calm wanderer,
Happy globe of land and air,
Some spirit is darted like a beam from thee,
Which penetrates my frozen frame,
And passes, with the warmth of flame,
With love and odour and deep melody,
Through me, through me!

THE EARTH.

Ha! ha! the caverns of my hollow mountains,
My cloven fire-crags, sound-exulting fountains,
Laugh with a vast and inextinguishable laughter!
The oceans and the deserts and the abysses,
And the deep air's unmeasured wildernesses,
Answer from all their clouds and billows, echoing after.

They cry aloud as I do:—"Sceptred Curse,
Who all our green and azure universe
Threatenedst to muffle round with black destruction, sending
A solid cloud to rain hot thunder-stones,
And splinter and knead down my children's bones,
All I bring forth to one void mass battering and blending—

"Until each crag-like tower and storied column,
Palace and obelisk and temple solemn,
My imperial mountains crowned with cloud and snow and fire,
My sea-like forests, every blade and blossom
Which finds a grave or cradle in my bosom,
Were stamped by thy strong hate into a lifeless mire—

"How art thou sunk, withdrawn, covered, drunk up
By thirsty nothing, as the brackish cup
Drained by a desert-troop, a little drop for all!
And from beneath, around, within, above,
Filling thy void annihilation, Love
Bursts in like light on caves cloven by the thunder-ball!"

THE MOON.

The snow upon my lifeless mountains
Is loosened into living fountains,
My solid oceans flow and sing and shine:
A spirit from my heart bursts forth,
It clothes with unexpected birth
My cold bare bosom: Oh! it must be thine
On mine, on mine!

Gazing on thee, I feel, I know,
Green stalks burst forth, and bright flowers grow,
And living shapes upon my bosom move:
Music is in the sea and air,
Wingèd clouds soar here and there,
Dark with the rain new buds are dreaming of:
'Tis Love, all Love!

THE EARTH.

It interpenetrates my granite mass;
Through tangled roots and trodden clay doth pass
Into the utmost leaves and delicatest flowers;
Upon the winds, among the clouds, 'tis spread;
It wakes a life in the forgotten dead,—
They breathe a spirit up from their obscurest bowers;

And, like a storm bursting its cloudy prison
With thunder and with whirlwind, has arisen
Out of the lampless caves of unimagined being:—
With earthquake shock and swiftness making shiver
Thought's stagnant chaos, unremoved for ever:—
Till hate, and fear, and pain, light-vanquished shadows, fleeing,

Leave Man, who *was* a many-sided mirror
Which could distort to many a shape of error
This true fair world of things, a sea reflecting love;
Which over all his kind—as the sun's heaven
Gliding o'er ocean, smooth, serene, and even—
Darting from starry depths radiance and light, doth move:—

Leave Man, even as a leprous child is left
Who follows a sick beast to some warm cleft
Of rocks through which the might of healing springs is poured,—
Then when it wanders home with rosy smile,
Unconscious, and its mother fears awhile
It is a spirit,—then, weeps on her child restored.

Man,—oh! not men! a chain of linkèd thought,
Of love and might to be divided not,
Compelling the elements with adamantine stress;
As the Sun rules, even with a tyrant's gaze,
The unquiet republic of the maze
Of Planets, struggling fierce towards heaven's free wilderness.

Man, one harmonious soul of many a soul,
Whose nature is its own divine control,

Where all things flow to all, as rivers to the sea;
Familiar acts are beautiful through love;
Labour and pain and grief, in life's green grove,
Sport like tame beasts,—none knew how gentle they could be!

His will, with all mean passions, bad delights,
And selfish cares, its trembling satellites,—
A spirit ill to guide, but mighty to obey,—
Is as a tempest-wingèd ship, whose helm
Love rules, through waves which dare not overwhelm,
Forcing life's wildest shores to own its sovereign sway.

All things confess his strength. Through the cold mass
Of marble and of colour his dreams pass,—
Bright threads whence mothers weave the robes their children wear;
Language is a perpetual Orphic song
Which rules with dædal harmony a throng
Of thoughts and forms which else senseless and shapeless were.

The lightning is his slave; heaven's utmost deep
Gives up her stars, and like a flock of sheep
They pass before his eye, are numbered, and roll on.
The tempest is his steed; he strides the air,
And the abyss shouts from her depth laid bare,
"Heaven, hast thou secrets? Man unveils me; I have none."

THE MOON.

The shadow of white death has passed
From my path in heaven at last,
A clinging shroud of solid frost and sleep;
And through my newly-woven bowers
Wander happy paramours,
Less mighty, but as mild as those who keep
Thy vales more deep.

THE EARTH.

—As the dissolving warmth of dawn may fold
A half infrozen dew-globe, green and gold
And crystalline, till it becomes a wingèd mist,
And wanders up the vault of the blue day,
Outlives the noon, and on the sun's last ray
Hangs o'er the sea, a fleece of fire and amethyst.

THE MOON.

Thou art folded, thou art lying,
In the light which is undying

Of thine own joy and heaven's smile divine;
All suns and constellations shower
On thee a light, a life, a power,
Which doth array thy sphere; thou pourest thine
On mine, on mine!

THE EARTH.

I spin beneath my pyramid of night,
Which points into the heavens,—dreaming delight,
Murmuring victorious joy in my enchanted sleep;
As a youth lulled in love-dreams faintly sighing,
Under the shadow of his beauty lying,
Which round his rest a watch of light and warmth doth keep.

THE MOON.

As, in the soft and sweet eclipse
When soul meets soul on lovers' lips,
High hearts are calm, and brightest eyes are dull;
So, when thy shadow falls on me,
Then am I mute and still, by thee
Covered; of thy love, Orb most beautiful,
Full, oh! too full!

Thou art speeding round the sun,
Brightest world of many a one;
Green and azure sphere which shinest
With a light which is divinest
Among all the lamps of heaven
To whom light and life is given.
I, thy crystal paramour,
Borne beside thee by a power
Like the polar paradise,
Magnet-like, of lovers' eyes;
I, a most enamoured maiden
Whose weak brain is overladen
With the pleasure of her love,
Maniac-like, around thee move—
Gazing, an insatiate bride,
On thy form from every side—
Like a Mænad round the cup
Which Agave lifted up
In the weird Cadmæan forest.
Brother, whereso'er thou soarest,
I must hurry, whirl, and follow,

Through the heavens wide and hollow;
Sheltered by the warm embrace
Of thy soul from hungry space,
Drinking from thy sense and sight
Beauty, majesty, and might;—
As a lover or chamelëon
Grows like what it looks upon;
As a violet's gentle eye
Gazes on the azure sky
Until its hue grows like what it beholds;
As a grey and watery mist
Glows like solid amethyst
Athwart the western mountain it enfolds,
When the sunset sleeps
Upon its snow,
And the weak day weeps
That it should be so.

THE EARTH.

O gentle Moon, the voice of thy delight
Falls on me like thy clear and tender light
Soothing the seaman borne the summer night
Through isles for ever calm;
O gentle Moon, thy crystal accents pierce
The caverns of my pride's deep universe,
Charming the tiger joy, whose tramplings fierce
Made wounds which need thy balm.

Panthea. I rise—as from a bath of sparkling water,
A bath of azure light among dark rocks—
Out of the stream of sound.

Ione. Ah me! sweet sister,
The stream of sound has ebbed away from us;
And you pretend to rise out of its wave,
Because your words fall like the clear soft dew
Shaken from a bathing Wood-nymph's limbs and hair.

Panthea. Peace, peace! A mighty Power which is as darkness,
Is rising out of earth, and from the sky
Is showered like night, and from within the air
Bursts, like eclipse which had been gathered up
Into the pores of sunlight. The bright visions,
Wherein the singing Spirits rode and shone,
Gleam like pale meteors through a watery night.

Ione. There is a sense of words upon mine ear.
Panthea. An universal sound like words. Oh! list!

DEMOGORGON.

Thou Earth, calm empire of a happy soul,
Sphere of divinest shapes and harmonies,
Beautiful orb, gathering as thou dost roll
The love which paves thy path along the skies!

THE EARTH.

I hear: I am as a drop of dew that dies.

DEMOGORGON.

Thou Moon which gazest on the nightly Earth
With wonder, as it gazes upon thee;
Whilst each, to men and beasts and the swift birth
Of birds, is beauty, love, calm, harmony!

THE MOON.

I hear: I am a leaf shaken by thee.

DEMOGORGON.

Ye Kings of Suns and Stars! Dæmons and Gods,
Etherial Dominations! who possess
Elysian, windless, fortunate abodes
Beyond Heaven's constellated wilderness!

A VOICE FROM ABOVE.

Our great Republic hears; we are blessed, and bless.

DEMOGORGON.

Ye happy Dead! whom beams of brightest verse
Are clouds to hide, not colours to pourtray,
Whether your nature is that universe
Which once ye saw and suffered—

A VOICE FROM BENEATH.

Or, as they
Whom we have left, we change and pass away—

DEMOGORGON.

Ye elemental Genii, who have homes
From man's high mind even to the central stone
Of sullen lead; from heaven's star-fretted domes
To the dull weed some sea-worm battens on!

A CONFUSED VOICE.

We hear: thy words waken Oblivion.

DEMOGORGON.

Spirits whose homes are flesh! ye beasts and birds,
Ye worms and fish, ye living leaves and buds,
Lightning and wind! and ye untameable herds,
Meteors and mists, which throng air's solitudes!

A Voice.

Thy voice to us is wind among still woods.

Demogorgon.

Man, who wert once a despot and a slave;
A dupe and a deceiver; a decay;
A traveller from the cradle to the grave
Through the dim night of this immortal day!

All.

Speak! thy strong words may never pass away.

Demogorgon.

This is the day which down the void abysm,
At the Earth-born's spell, yawns for Heaven's despotism,
And conquest is dragged captive through the deep.
Love, from its awful throne of patient power
In the wise heart, from the last giddy hour
Of dread endurance, from the slippery, steep,
And narrow verge of crag-like agony, springs,
And folds over the world its healing wings.

Gentleness, Virtue, Wisdom, and Endurance—
These are the seals of that most firm assurance
Which bars the pit over Destruction's strength;
And, if with infirm hand Eternity,
Mother of many acts and hours, should free
The serpent that would clasp her with his length,
These are the spells by which to re-assume
An empire o'er the disentangled doom.

To suffer woes which hope thinks infinite;
To forgive wrongs darker than death or night;
To defy Power which seems omnipotent;
To love, and bear; to hope till hope creates
From its own wreck the thing it contemplates;
Neither to change, nor falter, nor repent;
This, like thy glory, Titan, is to be
Good, great, and joyous, beautiful and free;
This is alone Life, Joy, Empire, and Victory!

NOTE ON PROMETHEUS UNBOUND, BY MRS. SHELLEY.

On the 12th of March 1818 Shelley quitted England, never to return. His principal motive was the hope that his health would be improved by a milder climate; he

suffered very much during the winter previous to his emigration, and this decided his vacillating purpose. In December 1817 he had written from Marlow to a friend, saying:—

"My health has been materially worse. My feelings at intervals are of a deadly and torpid kind, or awakened to such a state of unnatural and keen excitement that (only to instance the organ of sight) I find the very blades of grass and the boughs of distant trees present themselves to me with microscopic distinctness. Towards evening I sink into a state of lethargy and inanimation, and often remain for hours on the sofa between sleep and waking, a prey to the most painful irritability of thought. Such, with little intermission, is my condition. The hours devoted to study are selected with vigilant caution from among these periods of endurance. It is not for this that I think of travelling to Italy, even if I knew that Italy would relieve me. But I have experienced a decisive pulmonary attack; and, although at present it has passed away without any considerable vestige of its existence, yet this symptom sufficiently shows the true nature of my disease to be consumptive. It is to my advantage that this malady is in its nature slow, and, if one is sufficiently alive to its advances, is susceptible of cure from a warm climate. In the event of its assuming any decided shape, *it would be my duty* to go to Italy without delay. It is not mere health, but life, that I should seek:—and that not for my own sake; I feel I am capable of trampling on all such weakness—but for the sake of those to whom my life may be a source of happiness, utility, security, and honour—and to some of whom my death might be all that is the reverse."

In almost every respect his journey to Italy was advantageous. He left behind friends to whom he was attached; but cares of a thousand kinds, many springing from his lavish generosity, crowded round him in his native country, and, except the society of one or two friends, he had no compensation. The climate caused him to consume half his existence in helpless suffering. His dearest pleasure, the free enjoyment of the scenes of nature, was marred by the same circumstance.

He went direct to Italy, avoiding even Paris, and did not make any pause till he arrived at Milan. The first aspect of Italy enchanted Shelley; it seemed a garden of delight placed beneath a clearer and brighter heaven than any he had lived under before. He wrote long descriptive letters during the first year of his residence in Italy, which, as compositions, are the most beautiful in the world, and show how truly he appreciated and studied the wonders of nature and art in that divine land.

The poetical spirit within him speedily revived with all the power and with more than all the beauty of his first attempts. He meditated three subjects as the groundwork for lyrical dramas. One was the story of Tasso; of this a slight fragment of a song of Tasso remains. The other was one founded on the *Book of Job*, which he never abandoned in idea, but of which no trace remains among his papers. The third was the *Prometheus Unbound*. The Greek tragedians were now his most familiar companions in his wanderings, and the sublime majesty of Æschylus filled him with wonder and delight. The father of Greek tragedy does not possess the pathos of Sophocles, nor the variety and tenderness of Euripides; the interest on which he founds his dramas is often elevated above human vicissitudes into the mighty passions and throes of gods and demigods: such fascinated the abstract imagination of Shelley.

We spent a month at Milan, visiting the Lake of Como during that interval. Thence we passed in succession to Pisa, Leghorn, the Baths of Lucca, Venice, Este, Rome, Naples, and back again to Rome, whither we returned early in March 1819. During all this time Shelley meditated the subject of his drama, and wrote portions of it. Other poems were composed during this interval, and while at the Bagni di Lucca he translated Plato's *Symposium*. But, though he diversified his studies, his thoughts centred in the *Prometheus*. At last, when at Rome, during a bright and beautiful Spring, he gave up his whole time to the composition. The spot selected

for his study was, as he mentions in his preface, the mountainous ruins of the Baths of Caracalla. These are little known to the ordinary visitor at Rome. He describes them in a letter, with that poetry, and delicacy, and truth of description, which render his narrated impressions of scenery of unequalled beauty and interest.

At first he completed the drama in three acts. It was not till several months after, when at Florence, that he conceived that a fourth act, a sort of hymn of rejoicing in the fulfilment of the prophecies with regard to Prometheus, ought to be added to complete the composition.

The prominent feature of Shelley's theory of the destiny of the human species was that evil is not inherent in the system of the creation, but an accident that might be expelled. This also forms a portion of Christianity; God made earth and man perfect, till he, by his fall,

"Brought death into the world and all our woe."

Shelley believed that mankind had only to will that there should be no evil, and there would be none. It is not my part in these notes to notice the arguments that have been urged against this opinion, but to mention the fact that he entertained it, and was indeed attached to it with fervent enthusiasm. That man could be so perfectionized as to be able to expel evil from his own nature, and from the greater part of the creation, was the cardinal point of his system. And the subject he loved best to dwell on was the image of one warring with the Evil Principle, oppressed not only by it, but by all,—even the good, who were deluded into considering evil a necessary portion of humanity; a victim full of fortitude, and hope, and the spirit of triumph, emanating from a reliance on the ultimate omnipotence of Good. Such he had depicted in his last poem, when he made Laon the enemy and the victim of tyrants. He now took a more idealized image of the same subject. He followed certain classical authorities in figuring Saturn as the good principle, Jupiter the usurping evil one, and Prometheus as the regenerator, who, unable to bring mankind back to primitive innocence, used knowledge as a weapon to defeat evil, by leading mankind, beyond the state wherein they are sinless through ignorance, to that in which they are virtuous through wisdom. Jupiter punished the temerity of the Titan by chaining him to a rock of Caucasus, and causing a vulture to devour his still-renewed heart. There was a prophecy afloat in heaven portending the fall of Jove, the secret of averting which was known only to Prometheus; and the god offered freedom from torture on condition of its being communicated to him. According to the mythological story, this referred to the offspring of Thetis, who was destined to be greater than his father. Prometheus at last bought pardon, for his crime of enriching mankind with his gifts, by revealing the prophecy. Hercules killed the vulture, and set him free; and Thetis was married to Peleus, the father of Achilles.

Shelley adapted the catastrophe of this story to his peculiar views. The son greater than his father, born of the nuptials of Jupiter and Thetis, was to dethrone Evil, and bring back a happier reign than that of Saturn. Prometheus defies the power of his enemy, and endures centuries of torture; till the hour arrives when Jove, blind to the real event, but darkly guessing that some great good to himself will flow, espouses Thetis. At the moment, the Primal Power of the world drives him from his usurped throne, and Strength, in the person of Hercules, liberates Humanity, typified in Prometheus, from the tortures generated by evil done or suffered. Asia, one of the Oceanides, is the wife of Prometheus—she was, according to other mythological interpretations, the same as Venus and Nature. When the benefactor of mankind is liberated, Nature resumes the beauty of her prime, and is united to her husband, the emblem of the human race, in perfect and happy union. In the fourth Act, the Poet gives further scope to his imagination, and idealizes the forms of creation,—such as we know them, instead of such as they appeared to the Greeks. Maternal Earth, the mighty parent, is superseded by the Spirit of the

Earth, the guide of our planet through the realms of sky; while his fair and weaker companion and attendant, the Spirit of the Moon, receives bliss from the annihilation of evil in the superior sphere.

Shelley develops more particularly in the lyrics of this drama his abstruse and imaginative theories with regard to the creation. It requires a mind as subtle and penetrating as his own to understand the mystic meanings scattered throughout the poem. They elude the ordinary reader by their abstraction and delicacy of distinction, but they are far from vague. It was his design to write prose metaphysical essays on the nature of man, which would have served to explain much of what is obscure in his poetry; a few scattered fragments of observations and remarks alone remain. He considered these philosophical views of mind and nature to be instinct with the intensest spirit of poetry.

More popular poets clothe the ideal with familiar and sensible imagery. Shelley loved to idealize the real—to gift the mechanism of the material universe with a soul and a voice, and to bestow such also on the most delicate and abstract emotions and thoughts of the mind. Sophocles was his great master in this species of imagery.

I find in one of his manuscript books some remarks on a line in the *Œdipus Tyrannus*, which show at once the critical subtlety of Shelley's mind, and explain his apprehension of those "minute and remote distinctions of feeling, whether relative to external nature or the living beings which surround us," which he pronounces, in the letter quoted in the note to the *Revolt of Islam*, to comprehend all that is sublime in man.

"In the Greek Shakspeare, Sophocles, we find the image,

Πολλὰς δ' ὁδοὺς ἐλθόντα φροντίδος πλάνοις:

a line of almost unfathomable depth of poetry; yet how simple are the images in which it is arrayed!

"Coming to many ways in the wanderings of careful thought."

If the words ὁδοὺς and πλάνοις had not been used, the line might have been explained in a metaphorical instead of an absolute sense, as we say '*ways* and means,' and 'wanderings' for error and confusion. But they meant literally paths or roads, such as we tread with our feet; and wanderings, such as a man makes when he loses himself in a desert, or roams from city to city,—as Œdipus, the speaker of this verse, was destined to wander, blind and asking charity. What a picture does this line suggest of the mind as a wilderness of intricate paths, wide as the universe, which is here made its symbol; a world within a world which he who seeks some knowledge with respect to what he ought to do searches throughout, as he would search the external universe for some valued thing which was hidden from him upon its surface!"

In reading Shelley's poetry, we often find similar verses, resembling, but not imitating, the Greek in this species of imagery; for, though he adopted the style, he gifted it with that originality of form and colouring which sprung from his own genius.

In the *Prometheus Unbound*, Shelley fulfils the promise quoted from a letter in the Note on the *Revolt of Islam*.* The tone of the composition is calmer and more

* While correcting the proof-sheets of that poem, it struck me that the poet had indulged in an exaggerated view of the evils of restored despotism; which, however injurious and degrading, were less openly sanguinary than the triumph of anarchy, such as it appeared in France at the close of the last century. But at this time a book, *Scenes of Spanish Life*, translated by Lieutenant Crawford from the German of Dr. Huber, of Rostock, fell into my hands. The account of the triumph of the priests and the serviles, after the French invasion of Spain in 1823, bears a strong and frightful resemblance to some of the descriptions of the massacre of the patriots in the *Revolt of Islam*.

majestic; the poetry, more perfect as a whole; and the imagination displayed, at once more pleasingly beautiful and more varied and daring. The description of the Hours, as they are seen in the cave of Demogorgon, is an instance of this—it fills the mind as the most charming picture—we long to see an artist at work to bring to our view the

> "cars drawn by rainbow-winged steeds
> Which trample the dim winds: in each there stands
> A wild-eyed charioteer urging their flight.
> Some look behind, as fiends pursued them there,
> And yet I see no shapes but the keen stars:
> Others, with burning eyes, lean forth, and drink
> With eager lips the wind of their own speed,
> As if the thing they loved fled on before,
> And now, even now, they clasped it. Their bright locks
> Stream like a comet's flashing hair: they all
> Sweep onward."

Through the whole poem there reigns a sort of calm and holy spirit of Love; it soothes the tortured, and is hope to the expectant, till the prophecy is fulfilled, and Love, untainted by any evil, becomes the law of the world.

England had been rendered a painful residence to Shelley, as much by the sort of persecution with which in those days all men of liberal opinions were visited, and by the injustice he had lately endured in the Court of Chancery, as by the symptoms of disease which made him regard a visit to Italy as necessary to prolong his life. An exile, and strongly impressed with the feeling that the majority of his countrymen regarded him with sentiments of aversion such as his own heart could experience towards none, he sheltered himself from such disgusting and painful thoughts in the calm retreats of poetry, and built up a world of his own,—with the more pleasure, since he hoped to induce some one or two to believe that the earth might become such, did mankind themselves consent. The charm of the Roman climate helped to clothe his thoughts in greater beauty than they had ever worn before. And, as he wandered among the ruins made one with nature in their decay, or gazed on the Praxitelean shapes that throng the Vatican, the Capitol, and the palaces of Rome, his soul imbibed forms of loveliness which became a portion of itself. There are many passages in the *Prometheus* which show the intense delight he received from such studies, and give back the impression with a beauty of poetical description peculiarly his own. He felt this, as a poet must feel when he satisfies himself by the result of his labours; and he wrote from Rome, "My *Prometheus Unbound* is just finished, and in a month or two I shall send it. It is a drama, with characters and mechanism of a kind yet unattempted; and I think the execution is better than any of my former attempts."

I may mention, for the information of the more critical reader, that the verbal alterations in this edition of *Prometheus* are made from a list of errata written by Shelley himself.

THE CENCI.

A TRAGEDY IN FIVE ACTS.

DEDICATION.

TO LEIGH HUNT.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I INSCRIBE with your name, from a distant country, and after an absence whose months have seemed years, this the latest of my literary efforts.

Those writings which I have hitherto published have been little else than visions which impersonate my own apprehensions of the beautiful and the just. I can also perceive in them the literary defects incidental to youth and impatience; they are dreams of what ought to be, or may be. The drama which I now present to you is a sad reality. I lay aside the presumptuous attitude of an instructor, and am content to paint, with such colours as my own heart furnishes, that which has been.

Had I known a person more highly endowed than yourself with all that it becomes a man to possess, I had solicited for this work the ornament of his name. One more gentle, honourable, innocent, and brave; one of more exalted toleration for all who do and think evil, and yet himself more free from evil: one who knows better how to receive and how to confer a benefit, though he must ever confer far more than he can receive; one of simpler and (in the highest sense of the word) of purer life and manners, I never knew; and I had already been fortunate in friendships when your name was added to the list.

In that patient and irreconcileable enmity with domestic and political tyranny and imposture which the tenor of your life has illustrated, and which, had I health and talents, should illustrate mine, let us, comforting each other in our task, live and die.

All happiness attend you!

Your affectionate friend,

PERCY B. SHELLEY.

ROME, *May* 29, 1819.

PREFACE.

A MANUSCRIPT was communicated to me, during my travels in Italy, which was copied from the archives of the Cenci Palace at Rome, and contains a detailed account of the horrors which ended in the extinction of one of the noblest and richest families of that city during the Pontificate of Clement VIII., in the year 1599. The story is that an old man, having spent his life in debauchery and wickedness, conceived at length an implacable hatred towards his children; which showed itself towards one daughter under the form of an incestuous passion, aggravated by every circumstance of cruelty and violence. This daughter, after long and vain attempts to escape from what she considered a perpetual contamination both of body and mind, at length plotted with her mother-in-law and brother to murder their common tyrant. The young maiden, who was urged to this tremendous deed by an impulse which overpowered its horror, was evidently a most gentle and amiable being, a creature formed to adorn and be admired, and thus violently thwarted from her nature by the necessity of circumstances and opinion. The deed was quickly discovered; and, in spite of the most earnest prayers made to the Pope by the highest

persons in Rome, the criminals were put to death. The old man had, during his life, repeatedly bought his pardon from the Pope for capital crimes of the most enormous and unspeakable kind, at the price of a hundred thousand crowns; the death therefore of his victims can scarcely be accounted for by the love of justice. The Pope, among other motives for severity, probably felt that whosoever killed the Count Cenci deprived his treasury of a certain and copious source of revenue.* Such a story, if told so as to present to the reader all the feelings of those who once acted it, their hopes and fears, their confidences and misgivings, their various interests, passions, and opinions, acting upon and with each other, yet all conspiring to one tremendous end, would be as a light to make apparent some of the most dark and secret caverns of the human heart.

On my arrival at Rome, I found that the story of the Cenci was a subject not to be mentioned in Italian society without awakening a deep and breathless interest: and that the feelings of the company never failed to incline to a romantic pity for the wrongs, and a passionate exculpation of the horrible deed to which they urged her who has been mingled two centuries with the common dust. All ranks of people knew the outlines of this history, and participated in the overwhelming interest which it seems to have the magic of exciting in the human heart. I had a copy of Guido's picture of Beatrice, which is preserved in the Colonna Palace, and my servant instantly recognized it as the portrait of *La Cenci*.

This national and universal interest which the story produces, and has produced for two centuries and among all ranks of people in a great city where the imagination is kept for ever active and awake, first suggested to me the conception of its fitness for a dramatic purpose. In fact, it is a tragedy which has already received, from its capacity of awakening and sustaining the sympathy of men, approbation and success. Nothing remained, as I imagined, but to clothe it to the apprehensions of my countrymen in such language and action as would bring it home to their hearts. The deepest and the sublimest tragic compositions, *King Lear*, and the two plays in which the tale of Œdipus is told, were stories which already existed in tradition, as matters of popular belief and interest, before Shakspeare and Sophocles made them familiar to the sympathy of all succeeding generations of mankind.

This story of the Cenci is indeed eminently fearful and monstrous: anything like a dry exhibition of it on the stage would be insupportable. The person who would treat such a subject must increase the ideal, and diminish the actual, horror of the events, so that the pleasure which arises from the poetry which exists in these tempestuous sufferings and crimes may mitigate the pain of the contemplation of the moral deformity from which they spring. There must also be nothing attempted to make the exhibition subservient to what is vulgarly termed a moral purpose. The highest moral purpose aimed at in the highest species of the drama is the teaching of the human heart, through its sympathies and antipathies, the knowledge of itself; in proportion to the possession of which knowledge, every human being is wise, just, sincere, tolerant, and kind. If dogmas can do more, it is well: but a drama is no fit place for the enforcement of them. Undoubtedly no person can be truly dishonoured by the act of another; and the fit return to make to the most enormous injuries is kindness and forbearance, and a resolution to convert the injurer from his dark passions by peace and love. Revenge, retaliation, atonement, are pernicious mistakes. If Beatrice had thought in this manner, she would have been wiser and better; but she would never have been a tragic character: the few whom such an exhibition would have interested could never have been sufficiently interested for a dramatic purpose, from the want of finding sympathy in their interest among the

* The Papal Government formerly took the most extraordinary precautions against the publicity of facts which offer so tragical a demonstration of its own wickedness and weakness; so that the communication of the MS. had become, until very lately, a matter of some difficulty.

mass who surround them. It is in the restless and anatomizing casuistry with which men seek the justification of Beatrice, yet feel that she has done what needs justification—it is in the superstitious horror with which they contemplate alike her wrongs and their revenge—that the dramatic character of what she did and suffered consists.

I have endeavoured as nearly as possible to represent the characters as they probably were, and have sought to avoid the error of making them actuated by my own conceptions of right or wrong, false or true: thus under a thin veil converting names and actions of the sixteenth century into cold impersonations of my own mind. They are represented as Catholics, and as Catholics deeply tinged with religion. To a Protestant apprehension there will appear something unnatural in the earnest and perpetual sentiment of the relations between God and man which pervades the tragedy of *The Cenci*. It will especially be startled at the combination of an undoubting persuasion of the truth of the popular religion with a cool and determined perseverance in enormous guilt. But religion in Italy is not, as in Protestant countries, a cloak to be worn on particular days; or a passport which those who do not wish to be railed at carry with them to exhibit; or a gloomy passion for penetrating the impenetrable mysteries of our being, which terrifies its possessor at the darkness of the abyss to the brink of which it has conducted him. Religion co-exists, as it were, in the mind of an Italian Catholic with a faith in that of which all men have the most certain knowledge. It is interwoven with the whole fabric of life. It is adoration, faith, submission, penitence, blind admiration; not a rule for moral conduct. It has no necessary connexion with any one virtue. The most atrocious villain may be rigidly devout, and, without any shock to established faith, confess himself to be so. Religion pervades intensely the whole frame of society, and is, according to the temper of the mind which it inhabits, a passion, a persuasion, an excuse, a refuge; never a check. Cenci himself built a chapel in the court of his palace, and dedicated it to St. Thomas the Apostle, and established masses for the peace of his soul. Thus, in the first scene of the fourth Act, Lucretia's design in exposing herself to the consequences of an expostulation with Cenci, after having administered the opiate, was to induce him by a feigned tale to confess himself before death; this being esteemed by Catholics as essential to salvation; and she only relinquishes her purpose when she perceives that her perseverance would expose Beatrice to new outrages.

I have avoided with great care, in writing this play, the introduction of what is commonly called mere poetry, and I imagine there will scarcely be found a detached simile or a single isolated description, unless Beatrice's description of the chasm appointed for her father's murder should be judged to be of that nature.*

In a dramatic composition the imagery and the passion should interpenetrate one another, the former being reserved simply for the full development and illustration of the latter. Imagination is as the Immortal God which should assume flesh for the redemption of mortal passion. It is thus that the most remote and the most familiar imagery may alike be fit for dramatic purposes when employed in the illustration of strong feeling, which raises what is low, and levels to the apprehension that which is lofty, casting over all the shadow of its own greatness. In other respects I have written more carelessly; that is, without an over-fastidious and learned choice of words. In this respect, I entirely agree with those modern critics who assert that, in order to move men to true sympathy, we must use the familiar language of men; and that our great ancestors, the ancient English poets, are the writers a study of whom might incite us to do that for our own age which they have done for theirs.

* An idea in this speech was suggested by a most sublime passage in *El Purgatorio de San Patricio* of Calderon: the only plagiarism which I have intentionally committed in the whole piece.

But it must be the real language of men in general, and not that of any particular class to whose society the writer happens to belong. So much for what I have attempted. I need not be assured that success is a very different matter; particularly for one whose attention has but newly been awakened to the study of dramatic literature.

I endeavoured whilst at Rome to observe such monuments of this story as might be accessible to a stranger. The portrait of Beatrice at the Colonna Palace is most admirable as a work of art: it was taken by Guido during her confinement in prison. But it is most interesting as a just representation of one of the loveliest specimens of the workmanship of Nature. There is a fixed and pale composure upon the features: she seems sad and stricken down in spirit, yet the despair thus expressed is lightened by the patience of gentleness. Her head is bound with folds of white drapery, from which the yellow strings of her golden hair escape, and fall about her neck. The moulding of her face is exquisitely delicate; the eyebrows are distinct and arched; the lips have that permanent meaning of imagination and sensibility which suffering has not repressed, and which it seems as if death scarcely could extinguish. Her forehead is large and clear; her eyes, which we are told were remarkable for their vivacity, are swollen with weeping, and lustreless, but beautifully tender and serene. In the whole mien there is a simplicity and dignity which, united with her exquisite loveliness and deep sorrow, are inexpressibly pathetic. Beatrice Cenci appears to have been one of those rare persons in whom energy and gentleness dwell together without destroying one another: her nature was simple and profound. The crimes and miseries in which she was an actor and a sufferer are as the mask and the mantle in which circumstances clothed her for her impersonation on the scene of the world.

The Cenci Palace is of great extent; and, though in part modernized, there yet remains a vast and gloomy pile of feudal architecture in the same state as during the dreadful scenes which are the subject of this tragedy. The palace is situated in an obscure corner of Rome, near the quarter of the Jews; and from the upper windows you see the immense ruins of Mount Palatine, half hidden under their profuse overgrowth of trees. There is a court in one part of the palace (perhaps that in which Cenci built the chapel to St. Thomas) supported by granite columns, and adorned with antique friezes of fine workmanship, and built up, according to the ancient Italian fashion, with balcony over balcony of open work. One of the gates of the palace, formed of immense stones, and leading through a passage dark and lofty, and opening into gloomy subterranean chambers, struck me particularly.

Of the Castle of Petrella I could obtain no further information than that which is to be found in the manuscript.

RELATION OF THE DEATH OF THE FAMILY OF THE CENCI.

THE most wicked life which the Roman nobleman, Francesco Cenci, led while he lived in this world, not only occasioned his own ruin and death, but also that of many others, and brought down the entire destruction of his house. This nobleman was the son of Monsignore Cenci, who, having been treasurer during the pontificate of Pius V., left immense wealth to Francesco, his only son. From this inheritance alone he enjoyed an income of 160,000 crowns; and he increased his fortune by marrying an exceedingly rich lady, who died after she had given birth to seven unfortunate children. He then contracted a second marriage with Lucretia Petroni, a lady of a noble Roman family; but he had no children by her. Sodomy was the least, and atheism the greatest, of the vices of Francesco; as is proved by the tenor of his life. For he

was three times accused of sodomy, and paid the sum of 100,000 crowns to government, in commutation of the punishment rightfully awarded to this crime: and, concerning his religion, it is sufficient to state that he never frequented any church; and, although he caused a small chapel, dedicated to the apostle St. Thomas, to be built in the court of his palace, his intention in so doing was to bury there all his children, whom he cruelly hated. He had driven the eldest of these, Giacomo, Cristoforo, and Rocco, from the paternal mansion, while they were yet too young to have given him any real cause of displeasure. He sent them to the university of Salamanca; but, refusing to remit to them there the money necessary for their maintenance, they desperately returned home. They found that this change only increased their misery; for the hatred and contempt of their father towards them were so aggravated that he refused to dress or maintain them, so that they were obliged to have recourse to the Pope, who caused Cenci to make them a fit allowance, with which they withdrew from his house.

The third imprisonment of Francesco for his accustomed crime of sodomy occurred at this time; and his sons took occasion to supplicate the Pope to punish their father, and to remove so great a monster from his family. The Pope, though before inclined to condemn Francesco to the deserved punishment of death, would not do it at the request of his sons, but permitted him again to compound with the law by paying the accustomed penalty of 100,000 crowns. The hatred of Francesco towards his sons was augmented by this proceeding on their parts; he cursed them; and often also struck and ill-treated his daughters. The eldest of these, being unable any longer to support the cruelty of her father, exposed her miserable condition to the Pope, and supplicated him either to marry her, according to his choice, or to shut her up in a monastery, that by any means she might be liberated from the cruel oppression of her parent. Her prayer was heard, and the Pope, in pity to her unhappiness, bestowed her in marriage to Signore Carlo Gabrielli, one of the first gentlemen of the city of Gubbio, and obliged Francesco to give her a fitting dowry of some thousand crowns.

Francesco, fearing that his youngest daughter would, when she grew up, follow the example of her sister, bethought himself how to hinder this design, and for that purpose shut her up alone in an apartment of the palace, where he himself brought her food, so that no one might approach her; and imprisoned her in this manner for several months, often inflicting on her blows with a stick.

In the meantime ensued the death of two of his sons, Rocco and Cristoforo—one being assassinated by a surgeon, and the other by Paolo Corso, while he was attending mass. The inhuman father showed every sign of joy on hearing this news; saying that nothing would exceed his pleasure if all his children died, and that, when the grave should receive the last, he would, as a demonstration of joy, make a bonfire of all that he possessed. And on the present occasion, as a further sign of his hatred, he refused to pay the smallest sum towards the funeral expenses of his murdered sons.

Francesco carried his wicked debauchery to such an excess that he caused girls (of whom he constantly kept a number in his house) and also common courtezans, to sleep in the bed of his wife; and often endeavoured, by force and threats, to debauch his daughter Beatrice, who was now grown up, and exceedingly beautiful.* . . .

Beatrice, finding it impossible to continue to live in so miserable a manner, followed the example of her sister; she sent a well-written supplication to the Pope, imploring him to exercise his authority in withdrawing her from the violence and cruelty of her father.—But this petition, which might, if listened to, have saved this unfortunate girl from an early death, produced not the least effect. It was afterwards found among the collection of memorials, and it is pretended that it never came before the Pope.

Francesco, having discovered this attempt on the part of his daughter, became

* The details here are horrible, and unfit for publication.

more enraged, and redoubled his tyranny; confining with rigour not only Beatrice, but also his wife. At length, these unhappy women, finding themselves without hope of relief, driven by desperation, resolved to plan his death.

The Palace Cenci was sometimes visited by a Monsignore Guerra—a young man of handsome person and attractive manners, and of that facile character which might easily be induced to become a partner in any action, good or evil, as it might happen. His countenance was pleasing, and his person tall and well-proportioned. He was somewhat in love with Beatrice, and well acquainted with the turpitude of Francesco's character, and was hated by him on account of the familiar intercourse which subsisted between him and the children of this unnatural father: for this reason he timed his visits with caution, and never came to the house but when he knew that Francesco was absent. He was moved to a lively compassion of the state of Lucretia and Beatrice, who often related their increasing misery to him, and his pity was for ever fed and augmented by some new tale of tyranny and cruelty. In one of these conversations Beatrice let fall some words which plainly indicated that she and her mother-in-law contemplated the murder of their tyrant; and Monsignore Guerra not only showed approbation of their design, but also promised to co-operate with them in their undertaking. Thus stimulated, Beatrice communicated the design to her eldest brother, Giacomo, without whose concurrence it was impossible that they should succeed. This latter was easily drawn into consent, since he was utterly disgusted with his father, who ill-treated him, and refused to allow him a sufficient support for his wife and children.

The apartments of Monsignore Guerra were the place in which the circumstances of the crime about to be committed were concerted and determined on. Here Giacomo, with the understanding of his sister and mother-in-law, held various consultations, and finally resolved to commit the murder of Francesco to two of his vassals, who had become his inveterate enemies; one called Marzio, and the other Olimpio: the latter, by means of Francesco, had been deprived of his post as castellan of the Rock of Petrella.

It was already well known that Francesco, with the permission of Signor Marzio di Colonna, baron of that feud, had resolved to retire to Petrella, and to pass the summer there with his family. Some banditti of the kingdom of Naples were hired, and were instructed to lie in wait in the woods about Petrella, and, upon advice being given to them of the approach of Francesco, to seize upon him. This scheme was so arranged that, although the robbers were only to seize and take off Francesco, yet his wife and children should not be suspected of being accomplices in the act. But the affair did not succeed; for, as the banditti were not informed of his approach in time enough, Francesco arrived safe and sound at Petrella. They were obliged therefore to form some new scheme to obtain the end which every day made them more impatient to effect; for Francesco still persisted in his wicked conduct. He, being an old man, above seventy years of age, never quitted the castle; therefore no use could be made of the banditti, who were still secreted in the environs. It was determined, therefore, to accomplish the murder in Francesco's own house.

Marzio and Olimpio were called to the castle; and Beatrice, accompanied by her mother-in-law, conversed with them from a window during the night-time, when her father slept. She ordered them to repair to Monsignore Guerra with a note, in which they were desired to murder Francesco, in consideration of a reward of a thousand crowns: a third to be given them before the act, by Monsignore Guerra, and the other two-thirds by the ladies themselves, after the deed should be accomplished. Having consented to this agreement, they were secretly admitted into the castle the 8th of September 1598; but, because this day was the anniversary of the birth of the Blessed Virgin, the Signora Lucretia, held back by her veneration for so holy a time, desired, with the consent of her daughter-in-law, that the execution of the murder should be put off until the following day. They dexterously mixed opium with the

drink of Francesco, who, upon going to bed, was soon oppressed by a deep sleep. About midnight his daughter herself led the two assassins into the apartment of her father, and left them there that they might execute the deed they had undertaken: and retired to a chamber close by, where Lucretia remained also, expecting the return of the murderers, and the relation of their success. Soon after the assassins entered, and told the ladies that pity had held them back, and that they could not overcome their repugnance to kill in cold blood a poor sleeping old man. These words filled Beatrice with anger; and, after having bitterly reviled them as cowards and traitors, she exclaimed, "Since you have not courage enough to murder a sleeping man, I will kill my father myself; but your lives shall not be long secure." The assassins, hearing this short but terrible threat, feared that, if they did not commit the deed, the tempest would burst over their own heads; took courage; and re-entered the chamber where Francesco slept, and with a hammer drove a nail into his head, making it pass by his eye, and another they drove into his neck. After a few struggles the unhappy Francesco breathed his last. The murderers departed, after having received the remainder of the promised reward; besides which, Beatrice gave Marzio a mantle trimmed with gold. After this the two ladies, after drawing out the two nails, enveloped the body in a fine sheet, and carried it to an open gallery that overhung a garden, and had underneath an elder-tree. From thence they threw it down; so that it might be believed that Francesco, attending a call of nature, was traversing this gallery, when, being only supported by feeble beams, it had given way, and thus had lost his life.

And so indeed was it believed the next day, when the feigned lamentations of Lucretia and Beatrice, who appeared inconsolable, spread the news of Francesco's death. He received an honourable burial; and his family, after a short stay at the castle, returned to Rome to enjoy the fruits of their crime. They passed some time there in tranquillity; but Divine Justice, which would not allow so atrocious a wickedness to remain hid and unpunished, so ordered it that the Court of Naples, to which the account of the death of Cenci was forwarded, began to entertain doubts concerning the mode by which he came by it, and sent a commissary to examine the body and to take informations. Among other things, this man discovered a circumstance to the prejudice of the family of the deceased: it appeared that, the day after the event of her father's death, Beatrice had given to wash a sheet covered with blood, saying: . . . . .

These informations were instantly forwarded to the Court of Rome. But nevertheless several months passed without any step being taken in disfavour of the Cenci family; and, in the meantime, the youngest son of Francesco died, and two only remained of the five that he had had; namely, Giacomo and Bernardo. Monsignore Guerra, having heard of the notification made by the Court of Naples to that of Rome, fearing that Marzio and Olimpio might fall into the hands of justice, and be induced to confess their crime, suddenly hired men to murder them, but succeeded only in assassinating Olimpio at the city of Terni. Marzio, who had escaped this misfortune, soon incurred that of being imprisoned at Naples, where he confessed the whole; and instantly, while the arrival of Marzio at Rome from Naples was expected, Giacomo and Bernardo were arrested, and imprisoned in the Corte Savella, and Lucretia and Beatrice were confined in their own house under a good guard; but afterwards they were also conducted to the prison where were the brothers. They were here examined, and all constantly denied the crime, and particularly Beatrice, who also denied having given to Marzio the mantle trimmed with gold, of which mention was before made; and Marzio, overcome and moved by the presence of mind and courage of Beatrice, retracted all that he had deposed at Naples, and, rather than again confess, obstinately died under his torments.

There not being sufficient proof to justify putting the Cenci family to the torture, they were all transferred to Castello, where they remained several months in tran-

quillity. But, for their misfortune, one of the murderers of Olimpio at Terni fell into the hands of justice; he confessed that he had been hired to this deed by Monsignore Guerra, who had also commissioned him to assassinate Marzio. Fortunately for this prelate, he received prompt information of the testimony given against him, and was able to hide himself for a time, and to plan his escape, which was very difficult; for his stature, the fairness and beauty of his countenance, and his light hair, made him conspicuous for discovery. He changed his dress for that of a charcoal-man, blackening his face, and shaving his head. And thus disguised, driving two asses before him, with some bread and onions in his hands, he passed freely through Rome, under the eyes of the ministers of justice, who sought him everywhere; and, without being recognized by any one, passed out of one of the gates of the city, where, after a short time, he was met by the sbirri who were searching the country, and passed unknown by them, not without suffering great fear at his risk of being discovered and arrested. By means of this ingenious disguise he effected his escape to a safe country.

The flight of Monsignore Guerra, joined to the confession of the murderer of Olimpio, aggravated the other proofs so much that the Cenci were re-transferred from Castello to Corte Savella, and were condemned to be put to the torture. The two sons sank vilely under their torments, and became convicted; Lucretia, being of advanced age, having completed her fiftieth year, and being of a fat make, was not able to resist the torture of the cord—[*The original is wanting.*]—But the Signora Beatrice, being young, lively, and strong, neither with good nor ill treatment, with menaces nor fear of torture, would allow a single word to pass her lips which might inculpate her; and even, by her lively eloquence, confused the judges who examined her. The Pope, being informed of all that passed by Signor Ulisse Moracì, the judge employed in this affair, became suspicious that the beauty of Beatrice had softened the mind of this judge, and committed the cause to another, who found out another mode of torment, called the torture of the hair; and, when she was already tied under this torture, he brought before her her mother-in-law and brothers. They began all together to exhort her to confess; saying that, since the crime had been committed, they must suffer the punishment. Beatrice, after some resistance, said, "So you all wish to die, and to disgrace and ruin our house? This is not right; but, since it so pleases you, so let it be." And, turning to the gaolors, she told them to unbind her, and that all the examinations might be brought to her, saying, "That which I ought to confess, that will I confess; that to which I ought to assent, to that will I assent; and that which I ought to deny, that will I deny:"—and in this manner she was convicted without having confessed. They were then all unbound; and, since it was now five months since all had met, they wished to eat together that day: but, three days afterwards, they were again divided—the ladies being left in the Corte Savella, and the brothers being transferred to the dungeons of the Tordinona.

The Pope, after having seen all the examinations and the entire confessions, ordered that the delinquents should be drawn through the streets at the tails of horses, and afterwards decapitated. Many cardinals and princes interested themselves, and entreated that at least they might be allowed to draw up their defence. The Pope at first refused to comply, replying with severity, and asking these intercessors what defence had been allowed to Francesco when he had been so barbarously murdered in his sleep; but afterwards he yielded to allow them twenty-five days' time. The most celebrated Roman advocates undertook to defend the criminals; and, at the end of the appointed time, brought their writings to the Pope. The first that spoke was the advocate Nicholas di Angelis; but the Pope interrupted him angrily in the middle of his discourse, saying that he greatly wondered that there existed in Rome children unnatural enough to kill their father, and that there should be found advocates depraved enough to defend so horrible a crime. These words silenced all except the advocate Farinacci; who said, "Holy Father, we have not fallen at your feet to defend the atrocity of the crime, but to save the life of the

innocent, when your holiness will deign to hear us." The Pope listened patiently to him for four hours, and then, taking the writings, dismissed them. The advocate Altieri, who was the last to depart, turned back, and, throwing himself at the feet of the Pope, said that his office as advocate to the poor would not allow him to refuse to appear in this affair; and the Pope replied that he was not surprised at the part that he, but at that which the others, had taken. Instead of retiring to rest, he spent the whole night in studying the cause with the Cardinal di San Marcello—noting with great care the most exculpating passages of the writing of the advocate Farinacci; with which he became so satisfied that he gave hope of granting a pardon to the criminals. For the crimes of the father and children were contrasted and balanced in this writing; and, to save the sons, the greater guilt was attributed to Beatrice; and thus, by saving the mother-in-law, the daughter might the more easily escape, who was dragged, as it were, to the committing so enormous a crime by the cruelty of her father. The Pope, therefore, that the criminals might enjoy the benefit of time, ordered them again to be confined in secret. But, since by the high dispensation of Providence it was resolved that they should incur the just penalty of parricide, it so happened that at this time Paolo Santa Croce killed his mother in the town of Subiaco, because she refused to give up her inheritance to him. And the Pope, upon the occurrence of this second crime of this nature, resolved to punish those guilty of the first: and the more so because the matricide Santa Croce had escaped from the vengeance of the law by flight. The Pope returned to Monte Cavallo the 6th of May, that he might consecrate the next morning, in the neighbouring church of S. Maria degli Angeli, the Cardinal Diveristiana, appointed by him to be bishop of Olumbre, on the 3d of May of the same year, 1599: on the 10th of May he called into his presence Monsignore Ferrante Taverna, governor of Rome, and said to him, "I give up into your hands the Cenci cause, that you may, as soon as you can, execute the justice allotted to them." As soon as the governor arrived at his palace, he communicated the sentence to, and held a council with, the criminal judge, concerning the manner of death to be inflicted on the criminals. Many nobles instantly hastened to the palaces of the Quirinal and the Vatican, to implore the grace of at least a private death for the ladies, and the pardon of the innocent Bernardo; and fortunately they were in time to save the life of this youth, because many hours were necessarily employed in preparing the scaffold over the bridge of S. Angelo, and then in waiting for the Confraternity of Mercy, who were to accompany the condemned to the place of suffering.

The sentence was executed the morning of Saturday the 11th of May. The messengers charged with the communication of the sentence, and the Brothers of the Consorteria, were sent to the several prisons at five the preceding night; and at six the sentence of death was communicated to the unhappy brothers while they were placidly sleeping. Beatrice on hearing it broke into a piercing lamentation, and into passionate gesture, exclaiming, "How is it possible, O my God! that I must so suddenly die?" Lucretia, as prepared and already resigned to her fate, listened without terror to the reading of this terrible sentence, and with gentle exhortations induced her daughter-in-law to enter the chapel with her; and the latter, whatever excess she might have indulged in on the first intimation of a speedy death, so much the more now courageously supported herself, and gave every one certain proofs of a humble resignation. Having requested that a notary might be allowed to come to her, and her request being granted, she made her will, in which she left 15,000 crowns to the Fraternity of the Sacre Stimmate, and willed that all her dowry should be employed in portioning for marriage fifty maidens: and Lucretia, imitating the example of her daughter-in-law, ordered that she should be buried in the church of S. Gregorio at Monte Celio, with 32,000 crowns for charitable uses, and made other legacies; after which they passed some time in the Consorteria, reciting psalms and litanies and other prayers, with so much fervour that it well appeared that they were

assisted by the peculiar grace of God. At eight o'clock they confessed, heard mass, and received the holy communion. Beatrice, considering that it was not decorous to appear before the judges and on the scaffold with their splendid dresses, ordered two dresses, one for herself, and the other for her mother-in-law, made in the manner of the nuns—gathered up, and with long sleeves of black cotton for Lucretia, and of common silk for herself, with a large cord girdle. When these dresses came, Beatrice rose, and, turning to Lucretia—"Mother," said she, "the hour of our departure is drawing near; let us dress therefore in these clothes, and let us mutually aid one another in this last office." Lucretia readily complied with this invitation, and they dressed, each helping the other, showing the same indifference and pleasure as if they were dressing for a feast.

The Company of Mercy arrived soon after at the prisons of the Tordinona; and, while they were waiting below in the street with the crucifix until the condemned should descend, an accident happened which gave rise to such a tumult among the immense crowd there collected that there was danger of much disorder. It thus happened; some foreign gentlemen, who were posted at a high window, inadvertently threw down a flower-pot which was outside the window, which, falling on one of the brothers of the Order of Mercy, mortally wounded him. This caused a disturbance in the crowd; and those who were too far off to know the cause took flight, and, falling one over the other, several were wounded. When the tumult was calmed, the brothers Giacomo and Bernardo descended to the door of the prison, near which opportunely happened to be some fiscal officers, who, going up to Bernardo, told him that, through the clemency of the sovereign pontiff, his life was spared to him, with this condition that he should be present at the death of his relations. A scarlet mantle trimmed with gold, in which he had at first been conducted to prison, was given him, to envelop him. Giacomo was already on the car, when the *placet* of the Pope arrived, freeing him from the severer portion of the punishment added to the sentence, and ordering that it should be executed only by the hammer and quartering.

The funereal procession passed through the Via dell' Orso, by the Apollinara, thence through the Piazza Navona; from the church of S. Pantalio to the Piazza Pollarola, through the Campo di Fiori, S. Carlo a Castinari, to the Arco de' Conti Cenci; proceeding, it stopped under the Palace Cenci, and then finally rested at the Corte Savella, to take the two ladies. When these arrived, Lucretia remained last, dressed in black, as has been described, with a veil of the same colour, which covered her as far as her girdle. Beatrice was beside her, also covered by a veil. They wore velvet slippers, with silk roses and gold fastenings; and, instead of manacles, their wrists were bound by a silk cord, which was fastened to their girdles in such a manner as to give them almost the free use of their hands. Each had in her left hand the holy sign of benediction, and in the right a handkerchief, with which Lucretia wiped her tears, and Beatrice the perspiration from her forehead. Being arrived at the place of punishment, Bernardo was left on the scaffold, and the others were conducted to the chapel. During this dreadful separation, this unfortunate youth, reflecting that he was soon going to behold the decapitation of his nearest relatives, fell down in a deadly swoon, from which, however, he was at last recovered, and seated opposite the block. The first that came forth to die was Lucretia, who, being fat, found difficulty in placing herself to receive the blow. The executioner taking off her handkerchief, her neck was discovered, which was still handsome although she was fifty years of age. Blushing deeply, she cast her eyes down, and then, casting them up to heaven, full of tears, she exclaimed, "Behold, dearest Jesus, this guilty soul about to appear before thee—to give an account of its acts, mingled with many crimes. When it shall appear before thy Godhead, I pray thee to look on it with an eye of mercy, and not of justice." She then began to recite the psalm *Miserere mei Deus*; and, placing her neck under the axe, the head

was struck from her body while she was repeating the second verse of this psalm, at the words *et secundum multitudinem.* When the executioner raised the head, the populace saw with wonder that the countenance long retained its vivacity, until it was wrapped up in a black handkerchief, and placed in a corner of the scaffold. While the scaffold was being arranged for Beatrice, and whilst the Brotherhood returned to the chapel for her, the balcony of a shop filled with spectators fell, and five of those underneath were wounded, so that two died a few days after. Beatrice, hearing the noise, asked the executioner if her mother had died well, and, being replied that she had, she knelt before the crucifix, and spoke thus:—"Be thou everlastingly thanked, O my most gracious Saviour, since, by the good death of my mother, thou hast given me assurance of thy mercy towards me." Then, rising, she courageously and devoutly walked towards the scaffold, repeating by the way several prayers with so much fervour of spirit that all who heard her shed tears of compassion. Ascending the scaffold, while she arranged herself, she also turned her eyes to heaven, and thus prayed:—"Most beloved Jesus, who, relinquishing thy divinity, becamest a man, and didst through love purge my sinful soul also of its original sin with thy precious blood; deign, I beseech thee, to accept that which I am about to shed, at thy most merciful tribunal, as a penalty which may cancel my many crimes, and spare me a part of that punishment justly due to me." Then she placed her head under the axe, which at one blow was divided from her body, as she was repeating the second verse of the psalm *De profundis*, at the words *fiant aures tuæ;* the blow gave a violent motion to her body, and discomposed her dress. The executioner raised the head to the view of the people; and, in placing it in the coffin placed underneath, the cord by which it was suspended slipped from his hold, and the head fell to the ground, shedding a great deal of blood, which was wiped up with water and sponges.

On the death of his sister, Bernardo again fainted: the most efficacious remedies were for some time uselessly employed upon him; and it was believed by all that his second swoon, having found him already overcome and without strength, had deprived him of life. At length, after the lapse of a quarter of an hour, he came to himself, and by slow degrees recovered the use of his senses. Giacomo was then conducted to the scaffold, and the executioner took from him the mourning cloak which enveloped him. He fixed his eyes on Bernardo, and then, turning, addressed the people with a loud voice: "Now that I am about to present myself before the Tribunal of infallible Truth, I swear that, if my Saviour, pardoning me my faults, shall place me in the road to salvation, I will incessantly pray for the preservation of his Holiness, who has spared me the aggravation of punishment but too much due to my enormous crime, and has granted life to my brother Bernardo, who is most innocent of the guilt of parricide, as I have constantly declared in all my examinations. It only afflicts me in these my last moments that he should have been obliged to be present at so fatal a scene: but since, O my God, it has so pleased thee, *fiat voluntas tua.*" After speaking thus, he knelt down. The executioner blinded his eyes, and tied his legs to the scaffold; gave him a blow on the temple with a leaded hammer; cut off his head; and cut his body into four pieces, which were fixed on the hooks of the scaffolding.

When the last penalty of justice was over, Bernardo was reconducted to the prison of the Tordinona, where he was soon attacked by a burning fever; he was bled, and received other remedies, so that in the end he recovered his health, though not without great suffering. The bodies of Lucretia and Beatrice were left at the end of the bridge until the evening, illuminated by two torches, and surrounded by so great a concourse of people that it was impossible to cross the bridge. An hour after dark, the body of Beatrice was placed in a coffin, covered by a black velvet pall richly adorned with gold: garlands of flowers were placed, one at her head, and another at her feet; and the body was strewed with flowers. It was accompanied to the church

of S. Peter in Montorio by the Brotherhood of the Order of Mercy, and followed by many Franciscan monks, with great pomp and innumerable torches; she was there buried before the high altar, after the customary ceremony had been performed. By reason of the distance of the church from the bridge, it was four hours after dark before the ceremony was finished. Afterwards the body of Lucretia, accompanied in the same manner, was carried to the church of S. Gregorio upon the Celian Hill; where, after the ceremony, it was honourably buried.

Beatrice was rather tall, of a fair complexion; and she had a dimple on each cheek, which, especially when she smiled, added a grace to her lovely countenance that transported every one who beheld her. Her hair appeared like threads of gold; and, because they were extremely long, she used to tie it up, and, when afterwards she loosened it, the splendid ringlets dazzled the eyes of the spectator. Her eyes were of a deep blue, pleasing, and full of fire. To all these beauties she added, both in words and actions, a spirit and a majestic vivacity that captivated every one. She was twenty years of age when she died.

Lucretia was as tall as Beatrice, but her full make made her appear less: she was also fair, and so fresh-complexioned that at fifty, which was her age when she died, she did not appear above thirty. Her hair was black, and her teeth regular and white to an extraordinary degree.

Giacomo was of a middle size; fair but ruddy, and with black eyebrows: affable in his nature, of good address, and well skilled in every science and in all knightly exercises. He was not more than twenty-eight years of age when he died.

Lastly, Bernardo so closely resembled Beatrice in complexion, features, and everything else, that if they had changed clothes the one might easily have been taken for the other. His mind also seemed formed in the same model as that of his sister: and at the time of her death he was six-and-twenty years old.

He remained in the prison of Tordinona until the month of September of the same year; after which time, at the intercession of the Most Venerable Grand Brotherhood of the Most Holy Crucifix of St. Marcellus, he obtained the favour of his liberty upon paying the sum of 25,000 crowns to the Hospital of the Most Holy Trinity of Pilgrims. Thus he, as the sole remnant of the Cenci family, became heir to all their possessions. He is now married, and has a son named Cristoforo.

The most faithful portrait of Beatrice exists in the Palace of the Villa Pamfili, without the gate of San Pancrazio: if any other is to be found in the Palazzo Cenci, it is not shown to any one;—so as not to renew the memory of so horrible an event.

This was the end of this family. And until the time when this account is put together it has not been possible to find the Marquis Paolo Santa Croce; but there is a rumour that he dwells in Brescia, a city of the Venetian states.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

COUNT FRANCESCO CENCI.
GIACOMO, BERNARDO, } *his Sons.*
CARDINAL CAMILLO.

ORSINO, *a Prelate.*
SAVELLA, *the Pope's Legate.*
OLIMPIO, MARZIO, } *Assassins.*

ANDREA, *Servant to* CENCI.
Nobles, Judges, Guards, Servants.
LUCRETIA, *Wife of* CENCI, *and stepmother of his children.*
BEATRICE, *his daughter.*

The SCENE *lies principally in Rome, but changes during the Fourth Act to Petrella, a Castle among the Apulian Apennines.*

TIME.—During the Pontificate of Clement VIII.

ACT I.

SCENE I.—*An Apartment in the Cenci Palace.*

Enter COUNT CENCI *and* CARDINAL CAMILLO.

Camillo. That matter of the murder is hushed up
If you consent to yield his Holiness
Your fief that lies beyond the Pincian gate.
It needed all my interest in the conclave
To bend him to this point. He said that you
Bought perilous impunity with your gold;
That crimes like yours, if once or twice compounded,
Enriched the Church, and respited from hell
An erring soul which might repent and live;
But that the glory and the interest
Of the high throne he fills little consist
With making it a daily mart of guilt
So manifold and hideous as the deeds
Which you scarce hide from men's revolted eyes.

Cenci. The third of my possessions—let it go!
Ay, I once heard the nephew of the Pope
Had sent his architect to view the ground,
Meaning to build a villa on my vines
The next time I compounded with his uncle:
I little thought he should outwit me so!
Henceforth no witness—not the lamp—shall see
That which the vassal threatened to divulge
Whose throat is choked with dust for his reward.
The deed he saw could not have rated higher
Than his most worthless life:—it angers me!

"Respited me from hell!"—So may the Devil
Respite their souls from heaven! No doubt Pope Clement
And his most charitable nephews pray
That the Apostle Peter and the saints
Will grant for their sakes that I long enjoy
Strength, wealth, and pride, and lust, and length of days
Wherein to act the deeds which are the stewards
Of their revenue.—But much yet remains
To which they show no title.

Camillo. O Count Cenci!
So much that you might honourably live,
And reconcile yourself with your own heart,
And with your God, and with the offended world.
How hideously look deeds of lust and blood
Through those snow-white and venerable hairs!
Your children should be sitting round you now,
But that you fear to read upon their looks
The shame and misery you have written there.
Where is your wife? Where is your gentle daughter?
Methinks her sweet looks, which make all things else
Beauteous and glad, might kill the fiend within you.
Why is she barred from all society
But her own strange and uncomplaining wrongs?
Talk with me, Count; you know I mean you well.
I stood beside your dark and fiery youth,
Watching its bold and bad career, as men
Watch meteors,—but it vanished not; I marked
Your desperate and remorseless manhood; now
Do I behold you, in dishonoured age,
Charged with a thousand unrepented crimes.
Yet I have ever hoped you would amend,
And in that hope have saved your life three times.

Cenci. For which Aldobrandino owes you now
My fief beyond the Pincian.—Cardinal,
One thing, I pray you, recollect henceforth,
And so we shall converse with less restraint.
A man you knew spoke of my wife and daughter.
He was accustomed to frequent my house;
So the next day *his* wife and daughter came,
And asked if I had seen him; and I smiled:—
I think they never saw him any more.

Camillo. Thou execrable man, beware!—

Cenci. Of thee?
Nay, this is idle:—We should know each other.
As to my character for what men call crime,
Seeing I please my senses as I list,
And vindicate that right with force or guile,
It is a public matter, and I care not
If I discuss it with you. I may speak
Alike to you and my own conscious heart;
For you give out that you have half reformed me,
Therefore strong vanity will keep you silent,
If fear should not; both will, I do not doubt.
All men delight in sensual luxury,
All men enjoy revenge; and most exult
Over the tortures they can never feel,
Flattering their secret peace with others' pain.
But I delight in nothing else. I love
The sight of agony, and the sense of joy,—
When this shall be another's, and that mine.
And I have no remorse, and little fear,
Which are, I think, the checks of other men.
This mood has grown upon me, until now
Any design my captious fancy makes
The picture of its wish (and it forms none
But such as men like you would start to know)
Is as my natural food and rest debarred
Until it be accomplished.

Camillo. Art thou not
Most miserable?

Cenci. Why miserable?—
No. I am what your theologians call
"Hardened;" which they must be in impudence,
So to revile a man's peculiar taste.
True, I was happier than I am, while yet
Manhood remained to act the thing I thought,—
While lust was sweeter than revenge. And now
Invention palls; ay, we must all grow old.
But that there yet remains a deed to act
Whose horror might make sharp an appetite
Duller than mine, I'd do—I know not what.
When I was young, I thought of nothing else
But pleasure, and I fed on honey sweets.
Men, by St. Thomas! cannot live like bees,

And I grew tired: yet, till I killed a foe,
And heard his groans, and heard his children's groans,
Knew I not what delight was else on earth,—
Which now delights me little. I the rather
Look on such pangs as terror ill conceals;
The dry fixed eyeball, the pale quivering lip,
Which tell me that the spirit weeps within
Tears bitterer than the bloody sweat of Christ.
I rarely kill the body, which preserves,
Like a strong prison, the soul within my power,
Wherein I feed it with the breath of fear
For hourly pain.

Camillo. Hell's most abandoned fiend
Did never, in the drunkenness of guilt,
Speak to his heart as now you speak to me!
I thank my God that I believe you not.

Enter ANDREA.

Andrea. My lord, a gentleman from Salamanca
Would speak with you.

Cenci. Bid him attend me in
The grand saloon. [*Exit* ANDREA.

Camillo. Farewell; and I will pray
Almighty God that thy false impious words
Tempt not his Spirit to abandon thee. [*Exit* CAMILLO.

Cenci. The third of my possessions!—I must use
Close husbandry, or gold, the old man's sword,
Falls from my withered hand. But yesterday
There came an order from the Pope to make
Fourfold provision for my cursèd sons;
Whom I have sent from Rome to Salamanca,—
Hoping some accident might cut them off,
And meaning, if I could, to starve them there.
I pray thee, God, send some quick death upon them!
Bernardo and my wife could not be worse
If dead and damned. Then, as to Beatrice—
[*Looking around him suspiciously.*
I think they cannot hear me at that door;
What if they should? And yet I need not speak,
Though the heart triumphs with itself in words.
O thou most silent air, that shalt not hear
What now I think! thou pavement, which I tread
Towards her chamber! let your echoes talk

Of my imperious step, scorning surprise,
But not of my intent!—Andrea!

Enter ANDREA.

Andrea. My lord.
Cenci. Bid Beatrice attend me in her chamber
This evening—no, at midnight; and alone. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE II.—*A Garden of the Cenci Palace.*

Enter BEATRICE *and* ORSINO, *as in conversation.*

Beatrice. Pervert not truth,
Orsino. You remember where we held
That conversation;—nay, we see the spot
Even from this cypress. Two long years are past
Since on an April midnight, underneath
The moonlight ruins of Mount Palatine,
I did confess to you my secret mind.
Orsino. You said you loved me then.
Beatrice. You are a priest:
Speak to me not of love.
Orsino. I may obtain
The dispensation of the Pope to marry.
Because I am a priest, do you believe
Your image, as the hunter some struck deer,
Follows me not whether I wake or sleep?
Beatrice. As I have said, speak to me not of love.
Had *you* a dispensation, *I* have not;
Nor will I leave this home of misery
Whilst my poor Bernard, and that gentle lady
To whom I owe life and these virtuous thoughts,
Must suffer what I still have strength to share.
Alas, Orsino! all the love that once
I felt for you is turned to bitter pain.
Ours was a youthful contract, which you first
Broke by assuming vows no Pope will loose.
And yet I love you still, but holily,
Even as a sister or a spirit might;
And so I swear a cold fidelity.
And it is well perhaps we shall not marry:
You have a sly equivocating vein
That suits me not.—Ah! wretched that I am!
Where shall I turn? Even now you look on me

As you were not my friend, and as if you
Discovered that I thought so, with false smiles
Making my true suspicion seem your wrong.
Ah no! Forgive me. Sorrow makes me seem
Sterner than else my nature might have been;
I have a weight of melancholy thoughts,
And they forebode—but what can they forebode
Worse than I now endure?

Orsino. All will be well.
Is the petition yet prepared? You know
My zeal for all you wish, sweet Beatrice;
Doubt not but I will use my utmost skill
So that the Pope attend to your complaint.

Beatrice. Your zeal for all I wish!—Ah me! you are cold!
Your utmost skill!—Speak but one word—(*Aside*)—Alas!
Weak and deserted creature that I am,
Here I stand bickering with my only friend!
(*To* ORSINO.) This night my father gives a sumptuous feast,
Orsino; he has heard some happy news
From Salamanca, from my brothers there,
And with this outward show of love he mocks
His inward hate. 'Tis bold hypocrisy,
For he would gladlier celebrate their deaths,
Which I have heard him pray for on his knees.
Great God! that such a father should be mine!—
But there is mighty preparation made,
And all our kin, the Cenci, will be there,
And all the chief nobility of Rome.
And he has bidden me and my pale mother
Attire ourselves in festival array.
Poor lady! she expects some happy change
In his dark spirit from this act; I, none.
At supper I will give you the petition:
Till when—farewell.

Orsino. Farewell. [*Exit* BEATRICE.
I know the Pope
Will ne'er absolve me from my priestly vow
But by absolving me from the revenue
Of many a wealthy see; and, Beatrice,
I think to win thee at an easier rate.
Nor shall he read her eloquent petition:
He might bestow her on some poor relation

Of his sixth cousin, as he did her sister,
And I should be debarred from all access.
Then, as to what she suffers from her father,
In all this there is much exaggeration.
Old men are testy, and will have their way.
A man may stab his enemy or his vassal,
And live a free life as to wine or women,
And with a peevish temper may return
To a dull home, and rate his wife and children;
Daughters and wives call this foul tyranny.
I shall be well content if on my conscience
There rest no heavier sin than what they suffer,
From the devices of my love—a net
From which she shall escape not. Yet I fear
Her subtle mind, her awe-inspiring gaze,
Whose beams anatomize me nerve by nerve,
And lay me bare, and make me blush to see
My hidden thoughts.—Ah no! A friendless girl,
Who clings to me as to her only hope:—
I were a fool, not less than if a panther
Were panic-stricken by the antelope's eye,
If she escape me. [*Exit.*

SCENE III.—*A magnificent Hall in the Cenci Palace.*

A Banquet. Enter CENCI, LUCRETIA, BEATRICE, ORSINO, CAMILLO, NOBLES.

Cenci. Welcome, my friends and kinsmen; welcome ye,
Princes and Cardinals, Pillars of the Church,
Whose presence honours our festivity.
I have too long lived like an anchorite,
And, in my absence from your merry meetings,
An evil word is gone abroad of me;
But I do hope that you, my noble friends,
When you have shared the entertainment here,
And heard the pious cause for which 'tis given,
And we have pledged a health or two together,
Will think me flesh and blood as well as you;
Sinful indeed, for Adam made all so,
But tender-hearted, meek, and pitiful.

First Guest. In truth, my lord, you seem too light of heart,
Too sprightly and companionable a man,

To act the deeds that rumour pins on you.
(*To his Companion.*) I never saw such blithe and open cheer
In any eye.
Second Guest. Some most desired event,
In which we all demand a common joy,
Has brought us hither; let us hear it, Count.
Cenci. It is indeed a most desired event.
If, when a parent, from a parent's heart,
Lifts from this earth to the great Father of all
A prayer, both when he lays him down to sleep,
And when he rises up from dreaming it,—
One supplication, one desire, one hope,—
That he would grant a wish for his two sons,
Even all that he demands in their regard;
And suddenly, beyond his dearest hope,
It is accomplished; he should then rejoice,
And call his friends and kinsmen to a feast,
And task their love to grace his merriment.
Then honour me thus far—for I am he.
Beatrice (*to* LUCRETIA). Great God! how horrible! Some dreadful ill
Must have befallen my brothers!
Lucretia. Fear not, child;
He speaks too frankly.
Beatrice. Ah! my blood runs cold.
I fear that wicked laughter round his eye,
Which wrinkles up the skin even to the hair.
Cenci. Here are the letters brought from Salamanca;
Beatrice, read them to your mother. God,
I thank thee! In one night didst thou perform,
By ways inscrutable, the thing I sought.
My disobedient and rebellious sons
Are dead.—Why, dead.—What means this change of cheer?
You hear me not, I tell you they are dead:
And they will need no food or raiment more;
The tapers that did light them the dark way
Are their last cost. The Pope, I think, will not
Expect I should maintain them in their coffins.
Rejoice with me—my heart is wondrous glad!
(LUCRETIA *sinks, half fainting;* BEATRICE *supports her*).
Beatrice. It is not true!—Dear lady, pray look up.
Had it been true,—there is a God in Heaven,
He would not live to boast of such a boon.

Unnatural man, thou know'st that it is false!
Cenci. Ay, as the word of God; whom here I call
To witness that I speak the sober truth:
And whose most favouring providence was shown
Even in the manner of their deaths. For Rocco
Was kneeling at the mass, with sixteen others,
When the church fell and crushed him to a mummy;
The rest escaped unhurt. Cristofano
Was stabbed in error by a jealous man,
Whilst she he loved was sleeping with his rival.
All in the self-same hour of the same night;
Which shows that Heaven has special care of me.
I beg those friends who love me that they mark
The day a feast upon their calendars.
It was the twenty-seventh of December:
Ay, read the letters if you doubt my oath.
[*The assembly appears confused; several of the guests rise.*
First Guest. Oh horrible! I will depart!
Second Guest. And I!
Third Guest. No, stay!
I do believe it is some jest; though, faith!
'Tis mocking us somewhat too solemnly.
I think his son has married the Infanta,
Or found a mine of gold in El Dorado.
'Tis but to season some such news; stay, stay!
I see 'tis only raillery by his smile.
Cenci (*filling a bowl of wine, and lifting it up*).
O thou bright wine, whose purple splendour leaps
And bubbles gaily in this golden bowl
Under the lamplight, as my spirits do
To hear the death of my accursèd sons!
Could I believe thou wert their mingled blood,
Then would I taste thee like a sacrament,
And pledge with thee the mighty Devil in hell;
Who, if a father's curses, as men say,
Climb with swift wings after their children's souls,
And drag them from the very throne of heaven,
Now triumphs in my triumph!—But thou art
Superfluous; I have drunken deep of joy,
And I will taste no other wine to-night.
Here, Andrea! Bear the bowl around.
A Guest (*rising*). Thou wretch!

Will none among this noble company
Check the abandoned villain?
Camillo. For God's sake,
Let me dismiss the guests! You are insane!
Some ill will come of this.
Second Guest. Seize, silence him!
First Guest. I will!
Third Guest. And I!
Cenci (addressing those who rise with a threatening gesture).
Who moves? Who speaks? [*Turning to the company.*
'Tis nothing,
Enjoy yourselves.—Beware! for my revenge
Is as the sealed commission of a king,
That kills, and none dare name the murderer.
[*The Banquet is broken up; several of the Guests are departing.*
Beatrice. I do entreat you, go not, noble guests;
What although tyranny and impious hate
Stand sheltered by a father's hoary hair?
What if 'tis he who clothed us in these limbs
Who tortures them and triumphs? What if we,
The desolate and the dead, were his own flesh,
His children and his wife, whom he is bound
To love and shelter? Shall we therefore find
No refuge in this merciless wide world?
Oh think what deep wrongs must have blotted out
First love, then reverence, in a child's prone mind,
Till it thus vanquish shame and fear! Oh think!
I have borne much, and kissed the sacred hand
Which crushed us to the earth, and thought its stroke
Was perhaps some paternal chastisement;
Have excused much; doubted; and, when no doubt
Remained, have sought by patience, love, and tears,
To soften him; and, when this could not be,
I have knelt down through the long sleepless nights,
And lifted up to God the Father of all
Passionate prayers; and, when these were not heard,
I have still borne;—until I meet you here,
Princes and kinsmen, at this hideous feast
Given at my brothers' deaths. Two yet remain,
His wife remains and I,—whom if ye save not,
Ye may soon share such merriment again
As fathers make over their children's graves.

O Prince Colonna, thou art our near kinsman;
Cardinal, thou art the Pope's chamberlain;
Camillo, thou art chief Justiciary;—
Take us away!—

Cenci. (*He has been conversing with* CAMILLO *during the first part of* BEATRICE'S *speech; he hears the conclusion, and now advances.*)

I hope my good friends here
Will think of their own daughters—or perhaps
Of their own throats—before they lend an ear
To this wild girl.

Beatrice (*not noticing the words of Cenci*).

Dare not one look on me?
None answer? Can one tyrant overbear
The sense of many best and wisest men?
Or is it that I sue not in some form
Of scrupulous law, that ye deny my suit?
O God! that I were buried with my brothers!
And that the flowers of this departed Spring
Were fading on my grave! and that my father
Were celebrating now one feast for all!

Camillo. A bitter wish for one so young and gentle;
Can we do nothing?

Colonna. Nothing that I see.
Count Cenci were a dangerous enemy:
Yet I would second any one.

A Cardinal. And I.

Cenci. Retire to your chamber, insolent girl!

Beatrice. Retire thou, impious man! Ay, hide thyself
Where never eye can look upon thee more!
Wouldst thou have honour and obedience,
Who art a torturer? Father, never dream,
Though thou mayst overbear this company,
But ill must come of ill.—Frown not on me!
Haste, hide thyself, lest with avenging looks
My brothers' ghosts should hunt thee from thy seat!
Cover thy face from every living eye,
And start if thou but hear a human step:
Seek out some dark and silent corner; there
Bow thy white head before offended God,—
And we will kneel around, and fervently
Pray that he pity both ourselves and thee!

Cenci. My friends, I do lament this insane girl
Has spoilt the mirth of our festivity.
Good night, farewell; I will not make you longer
Spectators of our dull domestic quarrels.
Another time.— [*Exeunt all but* CENCI *and* BEATRICE.
My brain is swimming round;
Give me a bowl of wine.
(*To* BEATRICE). Thou painted viper!
Beast that thou art! Fair and yet terrible!
I know a charm shall make thee meek and tame.
Now get thee from my sight! [*Exit* BEATRICE.
Here, Andrea,
Fill up this goblet with Greek wine. I said
I would not drink this evening, but I must;
For, strange to say, I feel my spirits fail
With thinking what I have decreed to do. [*Drinking the wine.*
Be thou the resolution of quick youth
Within my veins, and manhood's purpose stern,
And age's firm, cold, subtle villany;
As if thou wert indeed my children's blood
Which I did thirst to drink. The charm works well;—
It must be done, it shall be done, I swear! [*Exit.*

ACT II.

SCENE I.—*An Apartment in the Cenci Palace.*

Enter LUCRETIA *and* BERNARDO.

Lucretia. Weep not, my gentle boy; he struck but me,
Who have borne deeper wrongs. In truth, if he
Had killed me, he had done a kinder deed.
O God Almighty, do thou look upon us!
We have no other friend but only thee.
Yet weep not; though I love you as my own,
I am not your true mother.
Bernardo. Oh! more, more
Than ever mother was to any child,
That have you been to me! Had he not been
My father, do you think that I should weep?
Lucretia. Alas! poor boy, what else couldst thou have done?

Enter BEATRICE.

Beatrice (*in a hurried voice*). Did he pass this way? Have you seen him, brother?
Ah! no, that is his step upon the stairs;
'Tis nearer now; his hand is on the door!
Mother, if I to thee have ever been
A duteous child, now save me! Thou great God,
Whose image upon earth a father is,
Dost thou indeed abandon me? He comes—
The door is opening now! I see his face;
He frowns on others, but he smiles on me,
Even as he did after the feast last night! [*Enter a Servant.*
Almighty God, how merciful thou art!
'Tis but Orsino's servant.—Well, what news?

Servant. My master bids me say the Holy Father
Has sent back your petition thus unopened. [*Giving a paper.*
And he demands at what hour 'twere secure
To visit you again.

Lucretia. At the Ave Mary. [*Exit Servant.*
So, daughter, our last hope has failed. Ah me!
How pale you look! you tremble, and you stand
Rapt in some fixed and fearful meditation,
As if one thought were over-strong for you.
Your eyes have a chill glare! Oh! dearest child,
Are you gone mad? If not, pray speak to me.

Beatrice. You see I am not mad; I speak to you.

Lucretia. You talked of something that your father did
After that dreadful feast. Could it be worse
Than when he smiled, and cried "My sons are dead!"
And every one looked in his neighbour's face
To see if others were as white as he?
At the first word he spoke, I felt the blood
Rush to my heart, and fell into a trance.
And, when it passed, I sat all weak and wild;
Whilst you alone stood up, and with strong words
Checked his unnatural pride; and I could see
The devil was rebuked that lives in him.
Until this hour thus you have ever stood
Between us and your father's moody wrath
Like a protecting presence: your firm mind
Has been our only refuge and defence.
What can have thus subdued it? What can now

Have given you that cold melancholy look,
Succeeding to your unaccustomed fear?
Beatrice. What is it that you say? I was just thinking
'Twere better not to struggle any more.
Men, like my father, have been dark and bloody,
Yet never—Oh! before worse comes of it,
'Twere wise to die! it ends in that at last.
Lucretia. Oh! talk not so, dear child! Tell me at once
What did your father do or say to you?
He stayed not, after that accursèd feast,
One moment in your chamber.—Speak to me.
Bernardo. Oh sister, sister, prithee speak to us!
Beatrice (speaking very slowly with a forced calmness). It was
one word, mother, one little word;
One look, one smile. [*Wildly.*
Oh! he has trampled me
Under his feet, and made the blood stream down
My pallid cheeks. And he has given us all
Ditch-water, and the fever-stricken flesh
Of buffaloes, and bade us eat or starve,
And we have eaten. He has made me look
On my beloved Bernardo, when the rust
Of heavy chains has gangrened his sweet limbs,—
And I have never yet despaired—But now!
What would I say? [*Recovering herself.*
Ah! no, 'tis nothing new.
The sufferings we all share have made me wild.
He only struck and cursed me as he passed:
He said, he looked, he did—nothing at all
Beyond his wont, yet it disordered me.
Alas! I am forgetful of my duty:
I should preserve my senses for your sake.
Lucretia. Nay, Beatrice; have courage, my sweet girl.
If any one despairs, it should be I,
Who loved him once, and now must live with him
Till God in pity call for him or me.
For you may, like your sister, find some husband,
And smile, years hence, with children round your knees;
Whilst I, then dead, and all this hideous coil,
Shall be remembered only as a dream.
Beatrice. Talk not to me, dear lady, of a husband.
Did you not nurse me when my mother died?

Did you not shield me and that dearest boy?
And had we any other friend but you
In infancy, with gentle words and looks,
To win our father not to murder us?
And shall I now desert you? May the ghost
Of my dead mother plead against my soul,
If I abandon her who filled the place
She left, with more even than a mother's love!

Bernardo. And I am of my sister's mind. Indeed,
I would not leave you in this wretchedness,
Even though the Pope should make me free to live
In some blithe place, like others of my age,
With sports, and delicate food, and the fresh air.
Oh never think that I will leave you, mother!

Lucretia. My dear, dear children!

Enter CENCI, *suddenly.*

Cenci. What! Beatrice here?
Come hither. [*She shrinks back, and covers her face.*
Nay, hide not your face, 'tis fair;
Look up! Why, yesternight you dared to look
With disobedient insolence upon me,
Bending a stern and an enquiring brow
On what I meant; whilst I then sought to hide
That which I came to tell you—but in vain.

Beatrice (*wildly staggering towards the door*). Oh that the earth would gape! Hide me, O God!

Cenci. Then it was I whose inarticulate words
Fell from my lips, and who with tottering steps
Fled from your presence, as you now from mine.
Stay, I command you! From this day and hour,
Never again, I think, with fearless eye,
And brow superior, and unaltered cheek,
And that lip made for tenderness or scorn,
Shalt thou strike dumb the meanest of mankind:
Me least of all. Now get thee to thy chamber.
Thou too, [*To* BERNARDO] loathed image of thy cursèd mother:
Thy milky meek face makes me sick with hate!
[*Exeunt* BEATRICE *and* BERNARDO.
(*Aside.*) So much has passed between us as must make
Me bold, her fearful. 'Tis an awful thing
To touch such mischief as I now conceive:

So men sit shivering on the dewy bank,
And try the chill stream with their feet; once in—
How the delighted spirit pants, for joy!
Lucretia (advancing timidly towards him). O husband! Pray
forgive poor Beatrice,—
She meant not any ill.
Cenci. Nor you perhaps?
Nor that young imp whom you have taught by rote
Parricide with his alphabet? Nor Giacomo?
Nor those two most unnatural sons who stirred
Enmity up against me with the Pope,
Whom in one night merciful God cut off?
Innocent lambs! they thought not any ill!
You were not here conspiring? You said nothing
Of how I might be dungeoned as a madman;
Or be condemned to death for some offence,
And you would be the witnesses? this failing,
How just it were to hire assassins, or
Put sudden poison in my evening drink?
Or smother me when overcome by wine?—
Seeing we had no other judge but God,
And he had sentenced me, and there were none
But you to be the executioners
Of his decree enregistered in heaven.
Oh no! You said not this?
Lucretia. So help me God,
I never thought the things you charge me with!
Cenci. If you dare speak that wicked lie again,
I'll kill you. What! it was not by your counsel
That Beatrice disturbed the feast last night?
You did not hope to stir some enemies
Against me, and escape, and laugh to scorn
What every nerve of you now trembles at?
You judged that men were bolder than they are;
Few dare to stand between their grave and me!
Lucretia. Look not so dreadfully! By my salvation,
I knew not aught that Beatrice designed;
Nor do I think she designed anything
Until she heard you talk of her dead brothers.
Cenci. Blaspheming liar! You are damned for this!
But I will take you where you may persuade
The stones you tread on to deliver you:

For men shall there be none but those who dare
All things,—not question that which I command.
On Wednesday next I shall set out. You know
That savage rock, the Castle of Petrella.
'Tis safely walled, and moated round about:
Its dungeons underground and its thick towers
Never told tales; though they have heard and seen
What might make dumb things speak. Why do you linger?
Make speediest preparation for the journey. [*Exit* LUCRETIA.
The all-beholding sun yet shines; I hear
A busy stir of men about the streets;
I see the bright sky through the window-panes.
It is a garish, broad, and peering day;
Loud, light, suspicious, full of eyes and ears;
And every little corner, nook, and hole,
Is penetrated with the insolent light.
Come, darkness! Yet what is the day to me?
And wherefore should I wish for night, who do
A deed which shall confound both night and day?
'Tis she shall grope through a bewildering mist
Of horror: if there be a sun in heaven,
She shall not dare to look upon its beams,
Nor feel its warmth. Let her, then, wish for night.
The act I think shall soon extinguish all
For me: I bear a darker deadlier gloom
Than the earth's shade, or interlunar air,
Or constellations quenched in murkiest cloud,
In which I walk secure and unbeheld
Towards my purpose.—Would that it were done! [*Exit.*

SCENE II.—*A Chamber in the Vatican.*

Enter CAMILLO *and* GIACOMO, *in conversation.*

Camillo. There is an obsolete and doubtful law,
By which you might obtain a bare provision
Of food and clothing.
Giacomo. Nothing more? Alas!
Bare must be the provision which strict law
Awards, and aged sullen avarice pays.
Why did my father not apprentice me
To some mechanic trade? I should have then
Been trained in no highborn necessities

Which I could meet not by my daily toil.
The eldest son of a rich nobleman
Is heir to all his incapacities;
He has wide wants, and narrow powers. If you,
Cardinal Camillo, were reduced at once
From thrice-driven beds of down, and delicate food,
An hundred servants and six palaces,
To that which nature doth indeed require?—

Camillo. Nay, there is reason in your plea; 'twere hard.

Giacomo. 'Tis hard for a firm man to bear. But I
Have a dear wife, a lady of high birth,
Whose dowry in ill hour I lent my father
Without a bond or witness to the deed;
And children, who inherit her fine senses,
The fairest creatures in this breathing world;
And she and they reproach me not. Cardinal,
Do you not think the Pope would interpose,
And stretch authority beyond the law?

Camillo. Though your peculiar case is hard, I know
The Pope will not divert the course of law.
After that impious feast the other night
I spoke with him, and urged him then to check
Your father's cruel hand. He frowned and said:
"Children are disobedient, and they sting
Their fathers' hearts to madness and despair,
Requiting years of care with contumely.
I pity the Count Cenci from my heart;
His outraged love perhaps awakened hate,
And thus he is exasperated to ill.
In the great war between the old and young,
I, who have white hairs and a tottering body,
Will keep at least blameless neutrality." [*Enter* ORSINO.
You, my good lord Orsino, heard those words.

Orsino. What words?

Giacomo. Alas! repeat them not again.—
There then is no redress for me; at least
None but that which I may achieve myself,
Since I am driven to the brink. But say,—
My innocent sister and my only brother
Are dying underneath my father's eye.
The memorable torturers of this land,
Galeaz Visconti, Borgia, Ezzelin,

Never inflicted on their meanest slave
What these endure; shall they have no protection?
Camillo. Why, if they would petition to the Pope,
I see not how he could refuse it. Yet
He holds it of most dangerous example
In aught to weaken the paternal power,
Being, as 'twere, the shadow of his own.—
I pray you now excuse me. I have business
That will not bear delay. [*Exit* CAMILLO.
Giacomo. But you, Orsino,
Have the petition; wherefore not present it?
Orsino. I *have* presented it, and backed it with
My earnest prayers and urgent interest;
It was returned unanswered. I doubt not
But that the strange and execrable deeds
Alleged in it—in truth, they might well baffle
Any belief—have turned the Pope's displeasure
Upon the accusers from the criminal:
So I should guess from what Camillo said.
Giacomo. My friend, that palace-walking devil, Gold,
Has whispered silence to his Holiness.
And we are left as scorpions ringed with fire:
What should we do but strike ourselves to death?
For he who is our murderous persecutor
Is shielded by a father's holy name,
Or I would— [*Stops abruptly.*
Orsino. What? Fear not to speak your thought.
Words are but holy as the deeds they cover.
A priest who has forsworn the God he serves;
A judge who makes Truth weep at his decree;
A friend who should weave counsel, as I now,
But as the mantle of some selfish guile;
A father who is all a tyrant seems;
Were the profaner for his sacred name.
Giacomo. Ask me not what I think! The unwilling brain
Feigns often what it would not; and we trust
Imagination with such fantasies
As the tongue dares not fashion into words;
Which have no words,—their horror makes them dim
To the mind's eye. My heart denies itself
To think what you demand.
Orsino. But a friend's bosom

Is as the inmost cave of our own mind,
Where we sit shut from the wide gaze of day,
And from the all-communicating air.
You look what I suspected—
Giacomo. Spare me now.
I am as one lost in a midnight wood,
Who dares not ask some harmless passenger
The path across the wilderness, lest he,
As my thoughts are, should be—a murderer.
I know thou art my friend; and all I dare
Speak to my soul, that will I trust with thee.
But now my heart is heavy, and would take
Lone counsel from a night of sleepless care.
Pardon me that I say farewell—farewell.
I would that to my own suspected self
I could address a word so full of peace.
Orsino. Farewell!—Be your thoughts better—or more bold.
I had disposed the Cardinal Camillo [*Exit* GIACOMO.
To feed his hope with cold encouragement.
It fortunately serves my close designs
That 'tis a trick of this same family
To analyse their own and other minds.
Such self-anatomy shall teach the will
Dangerous secrets: for it tempts our powers,
Knowing what must be thought and may be done,
Into the depth of darkest purposes.
So Cenci fell into the pit: even I—
Since Beatrice unveiled me to myself,
And made me shrink from what I cannot shun—
Show a poor figure to my own esteem,
To which I grow half reconciled. I'll do
As little mischief as I can; that thought
Shall fee the accuser Conscience. [*After a pause.*
Now what harm
If Cenci should be murdered?—Yet, if murdered,
Wherefore by me? And what if I could take
The profit, yet omit the sin and peril
In such an action? Of all earthly things
I fear a man whose blows outspeed his words;
And such is Cenci: and, while Cenci lives,
His daughter's dowry were a secret grave,
If a priest wins her.—O fair Beatrice!

Would that I loved thee not, or, loving thee,
Could but despise danger, and gold, and all
That frowns between my wish and its effect,
Or smiles beyond it!—There is no escape.
Her bright form kneels beside me at the altar,
And follows me to the resort of men,
And fills my slumber with tumultuous dreams,—
So when I wake my blood seems liquid fire;
And, if I strike my damp and dizzy head,
My hot palm scorches it: her very name,
But spoken by a stranger, makes my heart
Sicken and pant; and thus unprofitably
I clasp the phantom of unfelt delights,
Till weak imagination half possesses
The self-created shadow. Yet much longer
Will I not nurse this life of feverous hours:
From the unravelled hopes of Giacomo
I must work out my own dear purposes.
I see, as from a tower, the end of all:—
Her father dead; her brother bound to me
By a dark secret, surer than the grave;
Her mother scared and unexpostulating
From the dread manner of her wish achieved:
And she!—Once more take courage, my faint heart;
What dares a friendless maiden matched with thee?
I have such foresight as assures success.
Some unbeheld divinity doth ever,
When dread events are near, stir up men's minds
To black suggestions; and he prospers best,
Not who becomes the instrument of ill,
But who can flatter the dark spirit that makes
Its empire and its prey of other hearts,
Till it become his slave—as I will do. [*Exit.*

ACT III.

SCENE I.—*An Apartment in the Cenci Palace.*

LUCRETIA; *to her enter* BEATRICE (*she enters staggering, and speaks wildly*).

Beatrice. Reach me that handkerchief!—My brain is hurt,
My eyes are full of blood; just wipe them for me—

I see but indistinctly.—
Lucretia. My sweet child,
You have no wound; 'tis only a cold dew
That starts from your dear brow.—Alas! Alas!
What has befallen?
Beatrice. How comes this hair undone?
Its wandering strings must be what blind me so,
And yet I tied it fast.—Oh horrible!
The pavement sinks under my feet! the walls
Spin round! I see a woman weeping there,
And standing calm and motionless, whilst I
Slide giddily as the world reels!—My God!
The beautiful blue heaven is flecked with blood!
The sunshine on the floor is black! the air
Is changed to vapours such as the dead breathe
In charnel-pits! Pah! I am choked! There creeps
A clinging, black, contaminating mist
About me—'tis substantial, heavy, thick;
I cannot pluck it from me, for it glues
My fingers and my limbs to one another,
And eats into my sinews, and dissolves
My flesh to a pollution, poisoning
The subtle, pure, and inmost spirit of life!
My God! I never knew what the mad felt
Before; for I am mad beyond all doubt! [*More wildly.*
No, I am dead! These putrefying limbs
Shut round and sepulchre the panting soul
Which would burst forth into the wandering air! [*A pause.*
What hideous thought was that I had even now?
'Tis gone; and yet its burthen remains here,
O'er these dull eyes—upon this weary heart!
Oh world! Oh life! Oh day! Oh misery!
Lucretia. What ails thee, my poor child? She answers not.
Her spirit apprehends the sense of pain,
But not its cause; suffering has dried away
The source from which it sprung.
Beatrice (*frantically*). Like Parricide,
Misery has killed its father: yet its father
Never like mine—O God! What thing am I?
Lucretia. My dearest child, what has your father done?
Beatrice (*doubtfully*). Who art thou, questioner? I have no father.

(*Aside.*) She is the madhouse nurse who tends on me;
It is a piteous office. [*To* LUCRETIA, *in a slow-subdued voice.*
Do you know,
I thought I was that wretched Beatrice
Men speak of, whom her father sometimes hales
From hall to hall by the entangled hair;
At others, pens up naked in damp cells
Where scaly reptiles crawl, and starves her there
Till she will eat strange flesh. This woful story
So did I overact in my sick dreams
That I imagined—no, it cannot be!
Horrible things have been in this wild world,
Prodigious mixtures, and confusions strange
Of good and ill; and worse have been conceived
Than ever there was found a heart to do.
But never fancy imaged such a deed
As— [*Pauses, suddenly recollecting herself.*
Who art thou? Swear to me, ere I die
With fearful expectation, that indeed
Thou art not what thou seemest—Mother!

Lucretia. Oh my sweet child! know you—

Beatrice. Yet speak it not:
For then, if this be truth, that other too
Must be a truth, a firm enduring truth,
Linked with each lasting circumstance of life,
Never to change, never to pass away.
Why, so it is. This is the Cenci Palace;
Thou art Lucretia; I am Beatrice.
I have talked some wild words, but will no more.
Mother, come near me: from this point of time,
I am— [*Her voice dies away faintly.*

Lucretia. Alas! what has befallen thee, child?
What has thy father done?

Beatrice. What have I done?
Am I not innocent? Is it my crime
That one with white hair and imperious brow,
Who tortured me from my forgotten years
As parents only dare, should call himself
My father, yet should be—Oh! what am I?
What name, what place, what memory, shall be mine?
What retrospects, outliving even despair?

Lucretia. He is a violent tyrant, surely, child:

We know that death alone can make us free,—
His death or ours. But what can he have done
Of deadlier outrage or worse injury?
Thou art unlike thyself; thine eyes shoot forth
A wandering and strange spirit. Speak to me,—
Unlock those pallid hands whose fingers twine
With one another.

Beatrice. 'Tis the restless life
Tortured within them. If I try to speak,
I shall go mad. Ay, something must be done;
What, yet I know not—something which shall make
The thing that I have suffered but a shadow
In the dread lightning which avenges it;
Brief, rapid, irreversible, destroying
The consequence of what it cannot cure.
Some such thing is to be endured or done:
When I know what, I shall be still and calm,
And never anything will move me more.
But now!—O blood, which art my father's blood,
Circling through these contaminated veins,
If thou, poured forth on the polluted earth,
Couldst wash away the crime, and punishment
By which *I* suffer—no, that cannot be!
Many might doubt there were a God above,
Who sees and permits evil, and so die:
That faith no agony shall obscure in me.

Lucretia. It must indeed have been some bitter wrong:
Yet what I dare not guess. Oh! my lost child,
Hide not in proud impenetrable grief
Thy sufferings from my fear.

Beatrice. I hide them not.
What are the words which you would have me speak?
I, who can feign no image in my mind
Of that which has transformed me—I, whose thought
Is like a ghost shrouded and folded up
In its own formless horror! Of all words
That minister to mortal intercourse,
Which wouldst thou hear? for there is none to tell
My misery. If another ever knew
Aught like to it, she died as I will die,
And left it, as I must, without a name.
Death! Death! our law and our religion call thee

A punishment, and a reward. Oh! which
Have I deserved?

Lucretia. The peace of innocence,
Till in your season you be called to heaven.
Whate'er you may have suffered, you have done
No evil. Death must be the punishment
Of crime, or the reward of trampling down
The thorns which God has strewed upon the path
Which leads to immortality.

Beatrice. Ay, death
The punishment of crime. I pray thee, God,
Let me not be bewildered while I judge.
If I must live day after day, and keep
These limbs, the unworthy temple of thy Spirit,
As a foul den from which what thou abhorrest
May mock thee, unavenged—it shall not be!
Self-murder—no: that might be no escape,
For thy decree yawns like a hell between
Our will and it.—Oh! in this mortal world
There is no vindication and no law
Which can adjudge and execute the doom
Of that through which I suffer!

Enter ORSINO.

(*She approaches him solemnly.*) Welcome, friend!
I have to tell you that, since last we met,
I have endured a wrong so great and strange
That neither life nor death can give me rest.
Ask me not what it is, for there are deeds
Which have no form, sufferings which have no tongue.

Orsino. And what is he who has thus injured you?

Beatrice. The man they call my father: a dread name.

Orsino. It cannot be—

Beatrice. What it can be, or not,
Forbear to think. It is, and it has been;
Advise me how it shall not be again.
I thought to die; but a religious awe
Restrains me, and the dread lest death itself
Might be no refuge from the consciousness
Of what is yet unexpiated. Oh speak!

Orsino. Accuse him of the deed, and let the law
Avenge thee.

Beatrice. O ice-hearted counsellor!

If I could find a word that might make known
The crime of my destroyer; and, that done,
My tongue should like a knife tear out the secret
Which cankers my heart's core,—ay, lay all bare,
So that my unpolluted fame should be
With vilest gossips a stale-mouthèd story,
A mock, a by-word, an astonishment:—
If this were done, which never shall be done,
Think of the offender's gold, his dreaded hate,
And the strange horror of the accuser's tale,
Baffling belief and overpowering speech;
Scarce whispered, unimaginable, wrapped
In hideous hints.—Oh! most assured redress!

Orsino. You will endure it then?

Beatrice. Endure!—Orsino,
It seems your counsel is small profit.

[*Turns from him and speaks half to herself.*

Ay,
All must be suddenly resolved and done.
What is this undistinguishable mist
Of thoughts which rise, like shadow after shadow,
Darkening each other?

Orsino. Should the offender live?
Triumph in his misdeed? and make by use
His crime, whate'er it is (dreadful, no doubt)
Thine element? until thou mayst become
Utterly lost, subdued even to the hue
Of that which thou permittest.

Beatrice (*to herself*). Mighty Death!
Thou double-visaged shadow! only judge!
Rightfullest arbiter! [*She retires, absorbed in thought.*

Lucretia. If the lightning
Of God has e'er descended to avenge—

Orsino. Blaspheme not! His high providence commits
Its glory on this earth, and their own wrongs,
Into the hands of men; if *they* neglect
To punish crime—

Lucretia. But if one, like this wretch,
Should mock with gold opinion, law, and power?
If there be nó appeal to that which makes
The guiltiest tremble? If, because our wrongs,
For that they are unnatural, strange, and monstrous,
Exceed all measure of belief . . . . O God!

If, for the very reasons which should make
Redress most swift and sure, our injurer triumphs?
And we, the victims, bear worse punishment
Than that appointed for their torturer?
Orsino. Think not
But that there is redress where there is wrong,
So we be bold enough to seize it.
Lucretia. How?
If there were any way to make all sure,
I know not—but I think it might be good
To—
Orsino. Why, his late outrage to Beatrice;
For it is such, as I but faintly guess,
As makes remorse dishonour, and leaves her
Only one duty, how she may avenge;
You, but one refuge from ills ill endured;
Me, but one counsel—
Lucretia. For we cannot hope
That aid or retribution or resource
Will arise thence where every other one
Might find them with less need. [BEATRICE *advances.*
Orsino. Then—
Beatrice. Peace, Orsino!
And, honoured lady, while I speak, I pray
That you put off, as garments overworn,
Forbearance and respect, remorse and fear,
And all the fit restraints of daily life,
Which have been borne from childhood, but which now
Would be a mockery to my holier plea.
As I have said, I have endured a wrong
Which, though it be expressionless, is such
As asks atonement, both for what is past,
And lest I be reserved, day after day,
To load with crimes an overburthened soul,
And be—what ye can dream not. I have prayed
To God, and I have talked with my own heart,
And have unravelled my entangled will,
And have at length determined what is right.
Art thou my friend, Orsino? False or true?
Pledge thy salvation ere I speak.
Orsino. I swear
To dedicate my cunning and my strength,

My silence, and whatever else is mine,
To thy commands.
Lucretia. You think we should devise
His death?
Beatrice. And execute what is devised,
And suddenly. We must be brief and bold.
Orsino. And yet most cautious.
Lucretia. For the jealous laws
Would punish us with death and infamy
For that which it became themselves to do.
Beatrice. Be cautious as ye may, but prompt. Orsino,
What are the means?
Orsino. I know two dull fierce outlaws,
Who think man's spirit as a worm's, and they
Would trample out, for any slight caprice,
The meanest or the noblest life. This mood
Is marketable here in Rome. They sell
What we now want.
Lucretia. To-morrow, before dawn,
Cenci will take us to that lonely rock,
Petrella, in the Apulian Apennines.
If he arrive there—
Beatrice. He must not arrive.
Orsino. Will it be dark before you reach the tower?
Lucretia. The sun will scarce be set.
Beatrice. But I remember,
Two miles on this side of the fort, the road
Crosses a deep ravine; 'tis rough and narrow,
And winds with short turns down the precipice.
And in its depth there is a mighty rock,
Which has, from unimaginable years,
Sustained itself with terror and with toil
Over a gulf, and with the agony
With which it clings seems slowly coming down;—
Even as a wretched soul hour after hour
Clings to the mass of life; yet, clinging, leans;
And, leaning, makes more dark the dread abyss
In which it fears to fall. Beneath this crag,
Huge as despair, as if in weariness
The melancholy mountain yawns. Below,
You hear but see not an impetuous torrent
Raging among the caverns, and a bridge

Crosses the chasm; and high above there grow,
With intersecting trunks, from crag to crag,
Cedars and yews and pines, whose tangled hair
Is matted in one solid roof of shade
By the dark ivy's twine. At noonday here
'Tis twilight, and at sunset blackest night.

Orsino. Before you reach that bridge, make some excuse
For spurring on your mules, or loitering
Until—

Beatrice. What sound is that?

Lucretia. Hark! No, it cannot be a servant's step;
It must be Cenci, unexpectedly
Returned.—Make some excuse for being here.

Beatrice (*to* ORSINO *as she goes out*). That step we hear approach must never pass
The bridge of which we spoke.

[*Exeunt* LUCRETIA *and* BEATRICE.

Orsino. What shall I do?
Cenci must find me here, and I must bear
The imperious inquisition of his looks
As to what brought me hither! Let me mask
Mine own in some inane and vacant smile.

Enter GIACOMO, *in a hurried manner.*

How! Have you ventured thither? know you then
That Cenci is from home?

Giacomo. I sought him here;
And now must wait till he returns.

Orsino. Great God!
Weigh you the danger of this rashness?

Giacomo. Ay!
Does my destroyer know his danger? We
Are now no more, as once, parent and child,
But man to man; the oppressor to the oppressed;
The slanderer to the slandered; foe to foe.
He has cast Nature off which was his shield,
And Nature casts him off who is her shame;
And I spurn both. *Is it a father's throat*
Which I will shake? and say, "*I ask not gold;*
I ask not happy years; nor memories
Of tranquil childhood; nor home-sheltered love;
Though all these hast thou torn from me, and more;—
But only my fair fame; only one hoard

Of peace, which I thought hidden from thy hate,
Under the penury heaped on me by thee;
Or I will" . . . God can understand and pardon:
Why should I speak with man?

Orsino. Be calm, dear friend.

Giacomo. Well, I will calmly tell you what he did.
This old Francesco Cenci, as you know,
Borrowed the dowry of my wife from me,
And then denied the loan; and left me so
In poverty, the which I sought to mend
By holding a poor office in the state.
It had been promised to me, and already
I bought new clothing for my ragged babes,—
And my wife smiled, and my heart knew repose;
When Cenci's intercession, as I found,
Conferred this office on a wretch whom thus
He paid for vilest service. I returned
With this ill news, and we sate sad together,
Solacing our despondency with tears
Of such affection and unbroken faith
As temper life's worst bitterness; when he,
As he is wont, came to upbraid and curse,
Mocking our poverty, and telling us
Such was God's scourge for disobedient sons.
And then, that I might strike him dumb with shame,
I spoke of my wife's dowry; but he coined
A brief yet specious tale, how I had wasted
The sum in secret riot; and he saw
My wife was touched, and he went smiling forth.
And, when I knew the impression he had made,
And felt my wife insult with silent scorn
My ardent truth, and look averse and cold,
I went forth too: but soon returned again.
Yet not so soon but that my wife had taught
My children her harsh thoughts; and they all cried,
"Give us clothes, father! Give us better food!
What you in one night squander were enough
For months!" I looked, and saw that home was hell.
And to that hell will I return no more,
Until mine enemy has rendered up
Atonement, or, as he gave life to me,
I will, reversing Nature's law—

Orsino. Trust me,
The compensation which thou seekest here
Will be denied.
Giacomo. Then—Are you not my friend?
Did you not hint at the alternative
Upon the brink of which you see I stand,
The other day when we conversed together?
My wrongs were then less. That word "Parricide,"
Although I am resolved, haunts me like fear.
Orsino. It must be fear itself, for the bare word
Is hollow mockery. Mark how wisest God
Draws to one point the threads of a just doom,
So sanctifying it: what you devise
Is, as it were, accomplished.
Giacomo. Is he dead?
Orsino. His grave is ready. Know that, since we met,
Cenci has done an outrage to his daughter.
Giacomo. What outrage?
Orsino. That she speaks not, but you may
Conceive such half conjectures as I do,
From her fixed paleness, and the lofty grief
Of her stern brow bent on the idle air,
And her severe unmodulated voice,
Drowning both tenderness and dread; and last
From this:—That whilst her stepmother and I,
Bewildered in our horror, talked together
With obscure hints (both self-misunderstood,
And darkly guessing, stumbling in our talk
Over the truth, and yet to its revenge),
She interrupted us, and with a look
Which told, before she spoke it, "He must die"—
Giacomo. It is enough. My doubts are well appeased.
There is a higher reason for the act
Than mine; there is a holier judge than me,
A more unblamed avenger. Beatrice,
Who in the gentleness of thy sweet youth
Hast never trodden on a worm, or bruised
A living flower, but thou hast pitied it
With needless tears! fair sister, thou in whom
Men wondered how such loveliness and wisdom
Did not destroy each other! is there made
Ravage of thee? O heart, I ask no more

Justification!—Shall I wait, Orsino,
Till he return, and stab him at the door?
Orsino. Not so; some accident might interpose
To rescue him from what is now most sure;
And you are unprovided where to fly,
How to excuse or to conceal. Nay, listen:
All is contrived; success is so assured
That—

Enter BEATRICE.

Beatrice. 'Tis my brother's voice! You know me not?
Giacomo. My sister, my lost sister!
Beatrice. Lost indeed!
I see Orsino has talked with you, and
That you conjecture things too horrible
To speak, yet far less than the truth. Now, stay not,—
He might return. Yet kiss me; I shall know
That then thou hast consented to his death.
Farewell, farewell! Let piety to God,
Brotherly love, justice and clemency,
And all things that make tender hardest hearts,
Make thine hard, brother! Answer not—farewell.

[*Exeunt severally.*

SCENE II.—*A mean Apartment in* GIACOMO'S *House.*

GIACOMO *alone.*

Giacomo. 'Tis midnight, and Orsino comes not yet.

[*Thunder, and the sound of a storm.*

What! can the everlasting elements
Feel with a worm like man? If so, the shaft
Of mercy-winged lightning would not fall
On stones and trees. My wife and children sleep:
They are now living in unmeaning dreams:
But I must wake, still doubting if that deed
Be just which was most necessary. Oh!
Thou unreplenished lamp, whose narrow fire
Is shaken by the wind, and on whose edge
Devouring darkness hovers! thou small flame,
Which, as a dying pulse rises and falls,
Still flickerest up and down! how very soon,
Did I not feed thee, wouldst thou fail, and be
As thou hadst never been! So wastes and sinks,
Even now perhaps, the life that kindled mine;

But that no power can fill with vital oil
That broken lamp of flesh. Ha! 'tis the blood
Which fed these veins that ebbs till all is cold:
It is the form that moulded mine that sinks
Into the white and yellow spasms of death:
It is the soul by which mine was arrayed
In God's immortal likeness which now stands
Naked before Heaven's judgment-seat! [*A bell strikes.*
One! Two!
The hours crawl on; and, when my hairs are white,
My son will then perhaps be waiting thus,
Tortured between just hate and vain remorse;
Chiding the tardy messenger of news
Like those which I expect. I almost wish
He be not dead, although my wrongs are great;
Yet—'Tis Orsino's step.

Enter ORSINO.

Speak!

Orsino. I am come
To say he has escaped.

Giacomo. Escaped!

Orsino. And safe
Within Petrella. He passed by the spot
Appointed for the deed, an hour too soon.

Giacomo. Are we the fools of such contingencies?
And do we waste in blind misgivings thus
The hours when we should act? Then wind and thunder,
Which seemed to howl his knell, is the loud laughter
With which Heaven mocks our weakness! I henceforth
Will ne'er repent of aught designed or done,
But my repentance.

Orsino. See, the lamp is out.

Giacomo. If no remorse is ours when the dim air
Has drank this innocent flame, why should we quail
When Cenci's life, that light by which ill spirits
See the worst deeds they prompt, shall sink for ever?
No, I am hardened.

Orsino. Why, what need of this?
Who feared the pale intrusion of remorse
In a just deed? Although our first plan failed,
Doubt not but he will soon be laid to rest.
But light the lamp; let us not talk i' the dark.

Giacomo (*lighting the lamp.*) And yet, once quenched, I cannot thus relume
My father's life: do you not think his ghost
Might plead that argument with God?
Orsino. Once gone,
You cannot now recall your sister's peace;
Your own extinguished years of youth and hope;
Nor your wife's bitter words; nor all the taunts
Which from the prosperous weak misfortune takes;
Nor your dead mother; nor—
Giacomo. Oh speak no more!
I am resolved, although this very hand
Must quench the life that animated it.
Orsino. There is no need of that. Listen. You know
Olimpio, the castellan of Petrella
In old Colonna's time,—him whom your father
Degraded from his post? and Marzio,
That desperate wretch whom he deprived last year
Of a reward of blood well earned and due?
Giacomo. I knew Olimpio; and they say he hated
Old Cenci so that in his silent rage
His lips grew white only to see him pass.
Of Marzio I know nothing.
Orsino. Marzio's hate
Matches Olimpio's. I have sent these men—
But in your name, and as at your request—
To talk with Beatrice and Lucretia.
Giacomo. Only to talk?
Orsino. The moments which even now
Pass onward to to-morrow's midnight hour
May memorize their flight with death. Ere then
They must have talked, and may perhaps have done,
And made an end.
Giacomo. Listen! What sound is that?
Orsino. The house-dog moans, and the beams crack: nought else.
Giacomo. It is my wife complaining in her sleep.
I doubt not she is saying bitter things
Of me; and all my children round her dreaming
That I deny them sustenance.
Orsino. Whilst he
Who truly took it from them, and who fills

Their hungry rest with bitterness, now sleeps
Lapped in bad pleasures, and triumphantly
Mocks thee in visions of successful hate
Too like the truth of day.
Giacomo. If e'er he wakes
Again, I will not trust to hireling hands—
Orsino. Why, that were well. I must be gone; good night!
When next we meet. . . .
Giacomo. May all be done,—and all
Forgotten! Oh that I had never been! [*Exeunt.*

ACT IV.

SCENE I.—*An Apartment in the Castle of Petrella. Enter* CENCI.

Cenci. She comes not; yet I left her even now
Vanquished and faint. She knows the penalty
Of her delay. Yet what if threats are vain?
Am I not now within Petrella's moat?
Or fear I still the eyes and ears of Rome?
Might I not drag her by the golden hair?
Stamp on her? keep her sleepless till her brain
Be overworn? tame her with chains and famine?
Less would suffice. Yet so to leave undone
What I most seek! No, 'tis her stubborn will
Which, by its own consent, shall stoop as low
As that which drags it down.

Enter LUCRETIA.

Thou loathèd wretch!
Hide thee from my abhorrence; fly, begone!
Yet stay—Bid Beatrice come hither.
Lucretia. O
Husband! I pray, for thine own wretched sake,
Heed what thou dost. A man who walks like thee
Through crimes, and through the danger of his crimes,
Each hour may stumble o'er a sudden grave.
And thou art old; thy hairs are hoary grey.
As thou wouldst save thyself from death and hell,
Pity thy daughter; give her to some friend
In marriage; so that she may tempt thee not

To hatred,—or worse thoughts, if worse there be.
Cenci. What! like her sister, who has found a home
To mock my hate from with prosperity?
Strange ruin shall destroy both her and thee,
And all that yet remain. My death may be
Rapid; her destiny outspeeds it. Go,
Bid her come hither, and before my mood
Be changed, lest I should drag her by the hair.
Lucretia. She sent me to thee, husband. At thy presence
She fell, as thou dost know, into a trance;
And in that trance she heard a voice which said,
"Cenci must die! Let him confess himself!
Even now the accusing angel waits to hear
If God, to punish his enormous crimes,
Harden his dying heart!"
Cenci. Why—such things are:
No doubt divine revealings may be made.
'Tis plain I have been favoured from above,
For, when I cursed my sons, they died.—Ay—so—
As to the right or wrong, that's talk!—Repentance—
Repentance is an easy moment's work,
And more depends on God than me. Well—well—
I must give up the greater point, which was
To poison and corrupt her soul. [*A pause;* LUCRETIA *approaches anxiously, and then shrinks back as he speaks.*
One, two;
Ay—Rocco and Cristofano my curse
Strangled: and Giacomo, I think, will find
Life a worse hell than that beyond the grave:
Beatrice shall, if there be skill in hate,
Die in despair, blaspheming: to Bernardo,
He is so innocent, I will bequeath
The memory of these deeds, and make his youth
The sepulchre of hope, where evil thoughts
Shall grow like weeds on a neglected tomb.
When all is done, out in the wide Campagna
I will pile up my silver and my gold;
My costly robes, paintings, and tapestries;
My parchments, and all records of my wealth;
And make a bonfire in my joy, and leave
Of my possessions nothing but my name,—
Which shall be an inheritance to strip

Its wearer bare as infamy. That done,
My soul, which is a scourge, will I resign
Into the hands of him who wielded it;
Be it for its own punishment or theirs,
He will not ask it of me till the lash
Be broken in its last and deepest wound,—
Until its hate be all inflicted. Yet,
Lest death outspeed my purpose, let me make
Short work and sure. [*Going.*

Lucretia (*stops him*). Oh stay! It was a feint:
She had no vision, and she heard no voice.
I said it but to awe thee.

Cenci. That is well.
Vile palterer with the sacred truth of God,
Be thy soul choked with that blaspheming lie!
For Beatrice, worse terrors are in store
To bend her to my will.

Lucretia. Oh! to what will?
What cruel sufferings, more than she has known,
Canst thou inflict?

Cenci. Andrea! go, call my daughter;
And, if she comes not, tell her that I come.—
What sufferings? I will drag her, step by step,
Through infamies unheard of among men;
She shall stand shelterless in the broad noon
Of public scorn, for acts blazoned abroad,
One among which shall be—what? Canst thou guess?
She shall become (for what she most abhors
Shall have a fascination to entrap
Her loathing will) to her own conscious self
All she appears to others; and, when dead,
As she shall die unshrived and unforgiven,
A rebel to her father and her God,
Her corpse shall be abandoned to the hounds;
Her name shall be the terror of the earth;
Her spirit shall approach the throne of God
Plague-spotted with my curses. I will make
Body and soul a monstrous lump of ruin.

Enter ANDREA.

Andrea. The Lady Beatrice—

Cenci. Speak, pale slave! What
Said she?

Andrea. My lord, 'twas what she looked. She said:
"Go tell my father that I see the gulf
Of hell between us two, which *he* may pass;
I will not." [*Exit* ANDREA.

Cenci. Go thou quick, Lucretia,—
Tell her to come; yet let her understand
Her coming is consent: and say moreover
That, if she come not, I will curse her. [*Exit* LUCRETIA.
Ha!
With what but with a father's curse doth God
Panic-strike armèd Victory, and make pale
Cities in their prosperity? The world's Father
Must grant a parent's prayer against his child,
Be he who asks even what men call me.
Will not the deaths of her rebellious brothers
Awe her before I speak? for I on them
Did imprecate quick ruin, and it came. [*Enter* LUCRETIA.
Well, what? Speak, wretch!

Lucretia. She said, "I cannot come;
Go tell my father that I see a torrent
Of his own blood raging between us."

Cenci (*kneeling*). God!
Hear me! If this most specious mass of flesh
Which thou hast made my daughter; this my blood,
This particle of my divided being;
Or rather, this my bane and my disease,
Whose sight infects and poisons me; this devil
Which sprung from me as from a hell,—was meant
To aught good use; if her bright loveliness
Was kindled to illumine this dark world;
If, nursed by thy selectest dew of love,
Such virtues blossom in her as should make
The peace of life; I pray thee for my sake,
As thou the common God and Father art
Of her and me and all, reverse that doom!
Earth, in the name of God, let her food be
Poison, until she be encrusted round
With leprous stains! Heaven, rain upon her head
The blistering drops of the Maremma's dew,
Till she be speckled like a toad; parch up
Those love-enkindled lips, warp those fine limbs
To loathèd lameness! All-beholding sun,

Strike in thine envy those life-darting eyes
With thine own blinding beams!
Lucretia. Peace! peace!
For thine own sake unsay those dreadful words!
When high God grants, he punishes such prayers.
Cenci (*leaping up, and throwing his right hand towards Heaven*). He does his will, I mine! This in addition:
That, if she have a child——
Lucretia. Horrible thought!
Cenci. That, if she ever have a child,—and thou,
Quick Nature! I adjure thee by thy God
That thou be fruitful in her, and increase
And multiply, fulfilling his command
And my deep imprecation,—may it be
A hideous likeness of herself! that, as
From a distorting mirror, she may see
Her image mixed with what she most abhors,
Smiling upon her from her nursing breast.
And that the child may from its infancy
Grow day by day more wicked and deformed,
Turning her mother's-love to misery:
And that both she and it may live, until
It shall repay her care and pain with hate,
Or what may else be more unnatural—
So he may hunt her through the clamorous scoffs
Of the loud world to a dishonoured grave!
Shall I revoke this curse? Go, bid her come
Before my words are chronicled in heaven. [*Exit* LUCRETIA.
I do not feel as if I were a man,
But like a fiend appointed to chastise
The offences of some unremembered world.
My blood is running up and down my veins;
A fearful pleasure makes it prick and tingle:
I feel a giddy sickness of strange awe;
My heart is beating with an expectation
Of horrid joy. [*Enter* LUCRETIA.
What? Speak!
Lucretia. She bids thee curse;
And, if thy curses, as they cannot do,
Could kill her soul—
Cenci. She would not come. 'Tis well.
I can do both: first take what I demand,

And then extort concession. To thy chamber!
Fly ere I spurn thee: and beware this night
That thou cross not my footsteps. It were safer
To come between the tiger and his prey. [*Exit* LUCRETIA.
It must be late; mine eyes grow weary dim
With unaccustomed heaviness of sleep.
Conscience! O thou most insolent of lies!
They say that sleep, that healing dew of heaven,
Steeps not in balm the foldings of the brain
Which thinks thee an impostor. I will go,
First to belie thee with an hour of rest,
Which will be deep and calm, I feel; and then—
O multitudinous hell, the fiends will shake
Thine arches with the laughter of their joy!
There shall be lamentation heard in heaven
As o'er an angel fallen; and upon earth
All good shall droop and sicken, and ill things
Shall with a spirit of unnatural life
Stir and be quickened—even as I am now! [*Exit.*

SCENE II.—*Before the Castle of Petrella.*

Enter BEATRICE *and* LUCRETIA *above on the ramparts.*

Beatrice. They come not yet.
Lucretia. 'Tis scarce midnight.
Beatrice. How slow
Behind the course of thought, even sick with speed,
Lags leaden-footed Time!
Lucretia. The minutes pass—
If he should wake before the deed is done?
Beatrice. Oh mother! he must never wake again.
What thou hast said persuades me that our act
Will but dislodge a spirit of deep hell
Out of a human form.
Lucretia. 'Tis true he spoke
Of death and judgment with strange confidence
For one so wicked; as a man believing
In God, yet recking not of good or ill.
And yet to die without confession!—
Beatrice. Oh!
Believe that Heaven is merciful and just,
And will not add our dread necessity
To the amount of his offences.

Enter OLIMPIO *and* MARZIO, *below.*

Lucretia. See,
They come.

Beatrice. All mortal things must hasten thus
To their dark end. Let us go down.

[*Exeunt* LUCRETIA *and* BEATRICE *from above.*

Olimpio. How feel you to this work?

Marzio. As one who thinks
A thousand crowns excellent market-price
For an old murderer's life. Your cheeks are pale.

Olimpio. It is the white reflection of your own
Which you call pale.

Marzio. Is that their natural hue?

Olimpio. Or 'tis my hate, and the deferred desire
To wreak it, which extinguishes their blood.

Marzio. You are inclined then to this business?

Olimpio. Ay:
If one should bribe me with a thousand crowns
To kill a serpent which had stung my child,
I could not be more willing.

Enter BEATRICE *and* LUCRETIA *below.*

Noble ladies!

Beatrice. Are ye resolved?

Olimpio. Is he asleep?

Marzio. Is all
Quiet?

Lucretia. I mixed an opiate with his drink:
He sleeps so soundly—

Beatrice. That his death will be
But as a change of sin-chastising dreams,
A dark continuance of the hell within him,
Which God extinguish! But ye are resolved?
Ye know it is a high and holy deed?

Olimpio. We are resolved.

Marzio. As to the how this act
Be warranted, it rests with you.

Beatrice. Well, follow.

Olimpio. Hush! Hark! What noise is that?

Marzio. Ha! some one comes!

Beatrice. Ye conscience-stricken cravens, rock to rest
Your baby hearts. It is the iron gate,
Which ye left open, swinging to the wind,

That enters whistling as in scorn. Come, follow:
And be your steps like mine, light, quick, and bold. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE III.—*An Apartment in the Castle.*

Enter BEATRICE *and* LUCRETIA.

Lucretia. They are about it now.
Beatrice. Nay, it is done.
Lucretia. I have not heard him groan.
Beatrice. He will not groan.
Lucretia. What sound is that?
Beatrice. List! 'tis the tread of feet
About his bed.
Lucretia. My God!
If he be now a cold stiff corpse—
Beatrice. Oh fear not
What may be done, but what is left undone:
The act seals all.

Enter OLIMPIO *and* MARZIO.

Is it accomplished?
Marzio. What?
Olimpio. Did you not call?
Beatrice. When?
Olimpio. Now.
Beatrice. I ask if all is over.
Olimpio. We dare not kill an old and sleeping man.
His thin grey hair, his stern and reverent brow,
His veinèd hands crossed on his heaving breast,
And the calm innocent sleep in which he lay,
Quelled me. Indeed, indeed, I cannot do it.
Marzio. But I was bolder; for I chid Olimpio,
And bade him bear his wrongs to his own grave,
And leave *me* the reward. And now my knife
Touched the loose wrinkled throat, when the old man
Stirred in his sleep, and said, "God! hear, oh hear,
A father's curse! What, art thou not our father?"
And then he laughed. I knew it was the ghost
Of my dead father speaking through his lips,
And could not kill him.
Beatrice. Miserable slaves!
Where, if ye dare not kill a sleeping man,
Found ye the boldness to return to me
With such a deed undone? Base palterers!

Cowards and traitors! Why, the very conscience
Which ye would sell for gold and for revenge
Is an equivocation: it sleeps over
A thousand daily acts disgracing men;
And, when a deed where mercy insults Heaven——
Why do I talk?

[*Snatching a dagger from one of them, and raising it.*

Hadst thou a tongue to say
"She murdered her own father," I must do it!—
But never dream *ye* shall outlive him long!

Olimpio. Stop, for God's sake!

Marzio. I will go back and kill him.

Olimpio. Give me the weapon; we must do thy will.

Beatrice. Take it! Depart! Return!

[*Exeunt* OLIMPIO *and* MARZIO.

How pale thou art!
We do but that which 'twere a deadly crime
To leave undone.

Lucretia. Would it were done!

Beatrice. Even whilst
That doubt is passing through your mind, the world
Is conscious of a change. Darkness and hell
Have swallowed up the vapour they sent forth
To blacken the sweet light of life. My breath
Comes, methinks, lighter, and the gelid blood
Runs freely through my veins. Hark!

Enter OLIMPIO *and* MARZIO.

He is—

Olimpio. Dead!

Marzio. We strangled him, that there might be no blood;
And then we threw his heavy corpse i' the garden
Under the balcony; 'twill seem it fell.

Beatrice (*giving them a bag of coin*). Here, take this gold, and hasten to your homes.
And, Marzio, because thou wast only awed
By that which made *me* tremble, wear thou this!

[*Clothes him in a rich mantle.*

It was the mantle which my grandfather
Wore in his high prosperity, and men
Envied his state: so may they envy thine!
Thou wert a weapon in the hand of God
To a just use. Live long and thrive! And mark,

If thou hast crimes, repent: this deed is done.

[*A horn is sounded.*

Lucretia. Hark, 'tis the castle horn: my God! it sounds
Like the last trump!

Beatrice. Some tedious guest is coming.

Lucretia. The drawbridge is let down; there is a tramp
Of horses in the court! Fly, hide yourselves!

[*Exeunt* OLIMPIO *and* MARZIO.

Beatrice. Let us retire to counterfeit deep rest.
I scarcely need to counterfeit it now;
The spirit which doth reign within these limbs
Seems strangely undisturbed: I could even sleep
Fearless and calm. All ill is surely past. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE IV.—*Another Apartment in the Castle.*

Enter on one side the Legate SAVELLA, *introduced by a Servant, and on the other* LUCRETIA *and* BERNARDO.

Savella. Lady, my duty to his Holiness
Be my excuse that thus unseasonably
I break upon your rest. I must speak with
Count Cenci; doth he sleep?

Lucretia (*in a hurried and confused manner.*) I think he sleeps.
Yet wake him not, I pray; spare me awhile.
He is a wicked and a wrathful man;
Should he be roused out of his sleep to-night,
Which is, I know, a hell of angry dreams,
It were not well; indeed it were not well.
Wait till daybreak.— (*Aside.*) Oh! I am deadly sick!

Savella. I grieve thus to distress you, but the Count
Must answer charges of the gravest import,
And suddenly; such my commission is.

Lucretia (*with increased agitation.*) I dare not rouse him, I know none who dare;
'Twere perilous;—you might as safely waken
A serpent, or a corpse in which some fiend
Were laid to sleep.

Savella. Lady, my moments here
Are counted. *I* must rouse him from his sleep,
Since none else dare.

Lucretia (*aside.*) Oh terror! Oh despair!

(*To* BERNARDO.) Bernardo, conduct you the Lord Legate to
Your father's chamber. [*Exeunt* SAVELLA *and* BERNARDO.

Enter BEATRICE.

Beatrice. 'Tis a messenger
Come to arrest the culprit who now stands
Before the throne of unappealable God.
Both Earth and Heaven, consenting arbiters,
Acquit our deed.

Lucretia. Oh agony of fear!
Would that he yet might live! Even now I heard
The legate's followers whisper as they passed
They had a warrant for his instant death.
All was prepared, by unforbidden means,
Which we must pay so dearly, having done.
Even now they search the tower, and find the body!
Now they suspect the truth; now they consult,
Before they come to tax us with the fact!
Oh horrible, 'tis all discovered!

Beatrice. Mother,
What is done wisely is done well. Be bold
As thou art just. 'Tis like a truant child
To fear that others know what thou hast done,
Even from thine own strong consciousness; and thus
Write on unsteady eyes and altered cheeks
All thou wouldst hide. Be faithful to thyself,
And fear no other witness but thy fear.
For, if, as cannot be, some circumstance
Should rise in accusation, we can blind
Suspicion with such cheap astonishment,
Or overbear it with such guiltless pride,
As murderers cannot feign. The deed is done,
And what may follow now regards not me.
I am as universal as the light;
Free as the earth-surrounding air; as firm
As the world's centre. Consequence, to me,
Is as the wind which strikes the solid rock,
But shakes it not. [*A cry within and tumult.*

Voices. Murder! Murder! Murder!

Enter BERNARDO *and* SAVELLA.

Savella (*to his followers.*) Go search the castle round; sound
the alarm;
Look to the gates, that none escape!

Beatrice. What now?
Bernardo. I know not what to say—My father's dead.
Beatrice. How, dead? he only sleeps; you mistake, brother.
His sleep is very calm, very like death;
'Tis wonderful how well a tyrant sleeps.
He is not dead.
Bernardo. Dead, murdered!
Lucretia (with extreme agitation.) Oh no, no!
He is not murdered, though he may be dead;
I have alone the keys of those apartments.
Savella. Ha! Is it so?
Beatrice. My lord, I pray excuse us;
We will retire; my mother is not well;
She seems quite overcome with this strange horror.
[*Exeunt* LUCRETIA *and* BEATRICE.
Savella. Can you suspect who may have murdered him?
Bernardo. I know not what to think.
Savella. Can you name any
Who had an interest in his death?
Bernardo. Alas!
I can name none who had not, and those most
Who most lament that such a deed is done;
My mother, and my sister, and myself.
Savella. 'Tis strange! There were clear marks of violence.
I found the old man's body in the moonlight,
Hanging beneath the window of his chamber
Among the branches of a pine: he could not
Have fallen there, for all his limbs lay heaped
And effortless; 'tis true there was no blood.—
Favour me, sir—it much imports your house
That all should be made clear—to tell the ladies
That I request their presence. [*Exit* BERNARDO.
Enter Guards, bringing in MARZIO.
Guard. We have one.
Officer. My lord, we found this ruffian and another
Lurking among the rocks; there is no doubt
But that they are the murderers of Count Cenci.
Each had a bag of coin. This fellow wore
A gold-inwoven robe, which, shining bright
Under the dark rocks to the glimmering moon,
Betrayed them to our notice. The other fell
Desperately fighting.

Savella. What does he confess?

Officer. He keeps firm silence; but these lines found on him May speak.

Savella. Their language is at least sincere. [*Reads.*

"TO THE LADY BEATRICE.

"That the atonement of what my nature sickens to conjecture may soon arrive, I send thee, at thy brother's desire, those who will speak and do more than I dare write.

"Thy devoted servant,

"ORSINO."

Enter LUCRETIA, BEATRICE, *and* BERNARDO.

Know'st thou this writing, lady?

Beatrice. No.

Savella. Nor thou?

Lucretia (*her conduct throughout the scene is marked by extreme agitation.*)

Where was it found? What is it? It should be
Orsino's hand! It speaks of that strange horror
Which never yet found utterance, but which made
Between that hapless child and her dead father
A gulf of obscure hatred.

Savella. Is it so?

Is it true, lady, that thy father did
Such outrages as to awaken in thee
Unfilial hate?

Beatrice. Not hate, 'twas more than hate:
This is most true, yet wherefore question me?

Savella. There is a deed demanding question done;
Thou hast a secret which will answer not. [rash.

Beatrice. What say'st? My lord, your words are bold and

Savella. I do arrest all present in the name
Of the Pope's Holiness. You must to Rome.

Lucretia. Oh not to Rome! Indeed we are not guilty.

Beatrice. Guilty! Who dares talk of guilt? My lord,
I am more innocent of parricide
Than is a child born fatherless. Dear mother,
Your gentleness and patience are no shield
For this keen-judging world, this two-edged lie,
Which seems, but is not. What! will human laws—
Rather, will ye who are their ministers—

Bar all access to retribution first?
And then, when Heaven doth interpose to do
What ye neglect, arming familiar things
To the redress of an unwonted crime,
Make ye the victims who demanded it
Culprits? 'Tis ye are culprits! That poor wretch
Who stands so pale and trembling and amazed,
If it be true he murdered Cenci, was
A sword in the right hand of justest God.
Wherefore should I have wielded it? unless
The crimes which mortal tongue dare never name
God therefore scruples to avenge.

Savella. You own
That you desired his death?

Beatrice. It would have been
A crime no less than his if for one moment
That fierce desire had faded in my heart.
'Tis true I did believe, and hope and pray,
Ay, I even knew—for God is wise and just—
That some strange sudden death hung over him.
'Tis true that this did happen, and most true
There was no other rest for me on earth,
No other hope in heaven;—now what of this? [are both.

Savella. Strange thoughts beget strange deeds; and here I judge thee not.

Beatrice. And yet, if you arrest me,
You are the judge and executioner
Of that which is the life of life: the breath
Of accusation kills an innocent name,
And leaves for lame acquittal the poor life
Which is a mask without it. 'Tis most false
That I am guilty of foul parricide;
Although I must rejoice, for justest cause,
That other hands have sent my father's soul
To ask the mercy he denied to me.
Now leave us free: stain not a noble house
With vague surmises of rejected crime;
Add to our sufferings and your own neglect
No heavier sum; let them have been enough.
Leave us the wreck we have.

Savella. I dare not, lady.
I pray that you prepare yourselves for Rome:

There the Pope's further pleasure will be known.
Lucretia. Oh not to Rome! Oh take us not to Rome!
Beatrice. Why not to Rome, dear mother? There, as here,
Our innocence is as an armèd heel
To trample accusation. God is there
As here, and with his shadow ever clothes
The innocent, the injured, and the weak;
And such are we. Cheer up, dear lady! lean
On me; collect your wandering thoughts. My lord,
As soon as you have taken some refreshment,
And had all such examinations made
Upon the spot as may be necessary
To the full understanding of this matter,
We shall be ready. Mother, will you come?
Lucretia. Ha! they will bind us to the rack, and wrest
Self-accusation from our agony!
Will Giacomo be there? Orsino? Marzio?
All present; all confronted; all demanding,
Each from the other's countenance, the thing
Which is in every heart! Oh misery!
[*She faints, and is borne out.*
Savella. She faints; an ill appearance this.
Beatrice. My lord,
She knows not yet the uses of the world.
She fears that Power is as a beast which grasps
And loosens not: a snake whose look transmutes
All things to guilt, which is its nutriment.
She cannot know how well the supine slaves
Of blind authority read the truth of things
When written on a brow of guilelessness:
She sees not yet triumphant Innocence
Stand at the judgment-seat of mortal man,
A judge and an accuser of the wrong
Which drags it there.—Prepare yourself, my lord;
Our suite will join yours in the court below. [*Exeunt.*

ACT V.

SCENE I.—*An Apartment in* ORSINO'S *Palace.*

Enter ORSINO *and* GIACOMO.

Giacomo. Do evil deeds thus quickly come to end?
Oh that the vain remorse which must chastise
Crimes done had but as loud a voice to warn
As its keen sting is mortal to avenge!
Oh that the hour when present had cast off
The mantle of its mystery, and shown
The ghastly form with which it now returns,
When its scared game is roused, cheering the hounds
Of conscience to their prey! Alas, alas!
It was a wicked thought, a piteous deed,
To kill an old and hoary-headed father!

Orsino. It has turned out unluckily, in truth.

Giacomo. To violate the sacred doors of sleep;
To cheat kind Nature of the placid death
Which she prepares for overwearied age;
To drag from heaven an unrepentant soul,
Which might have quenched in reconciling prayers
A life of burning crimes—

Orsino. You cannot say
I urged you to the deed.

Giacomo. Oh! had I never
Found in thy smooth and ready countenance
The mirror of my darkest thoughts; hadst thou
Never with hints and questions made me look
Upon the monster of my thought, until
It grew familiar to desire—

Orsino. 'Tis thus
Men cast the blame of their unprosperous acts
Upon the abettors of their own resolve,
Or anything but their weak guilty selves.
And yet, confess the truth, it is the peril
In which you stand that gives you this pale sickness
Of penitence; confess, 'tis Fear, disguised
From its own shame, that takes the mantle now
Of thin Remorse. What if we yet were safe?

Giacomo. How can that be? Already Beatrice,
Lucretia, and the murderer, are in prison.

I doubt not, officers are, whilst we speak,
Sent to arrest us.
Orsino. I have all prepared
For instant flight. We can escape even now,
So we take fleet Occasion by the hair.
Giacomo. Rather expire in tortures, as I may!
What! will you cast by self-accusing flight
Assured conviction upon Beatrice?
She who alone, in this unnatural work,
Stands like God's angel ministered upon
By fiends; avenging such a nameless wrong
As turns black parricide to piety;
Whilst we for basest ends . . . I fear, Orsino,
While I consider all your words and looks,
Comparing them with your proposal now,
That you must be a villain. For what end
Could you engage in such a perilous crime,
Training me on with hints and signs and smiles
Even to this gulf? Thou art no liar? No,
Thou art a lie! Traitor and murderer!
Coward and slave! But no—defend thyself; [*Drawing.*
Let the sword speak what the indignant tongue
Disdains to brand thee with!
Orsino. Put up your weapon.
Is it the desperation of your fear
Makes you thus rash and sudden with a friend
Now ruined for your sake? If honest anger
Have moved you, know that what I just proposed
Was but to try you. As for me, I think
Thankless affection led me to this point;
From which, if my firm temper *could* repent,
I cannot now recede. Even whilst we speak,
The ministers of justice wait below:
They grant me these brief moments. Now, if you
Have any word of melancholy comfort
To speak to your pale wife, 'twere best to pass
Out at the postern, and avoid them so.
Giacomo. O generous friend! How canst thou pardon me?
Would that my life could purchase thine!
Orsino. That wish
Now comes a day too late. Haste; fare thee well!
Hear'st thou not steps along the corridor? [*Exit* GIACOMO.

I'm sorry for it; but the guards are waiting
At his own gate, and such was my contrivance
That I might rid me both of him and them.
I thought to act a solemn comedy
Upon the painted scene of this new world,
And to attain my own peculiar ends
By some such plot of mingled good and ill
As others weave; but there arose a Power
Which grasped and snapped the threads of my device,
And turned it to a net of ruin—Ha! [*A shout is heard.*
Is that my name I hear proclaimed abroad?
But I will pass, wrapped in a vile disguise,
Rags on my back, and a false innocence
Upon my face, through the misdeeming crowd
Which judges by what seems. 'Tis easy then,
For a new name and for a country new,
And a new life fashioned on old desires,
To change the honours of abandoned Rome:
And these must be the masks of that within,
Which must remain unaltered.—Oh! I fear
That what is past will never let me rest!
Why, when none else is conscious, but myself,
Of my misdeeds, should my own heart's contempt
Trouble me? have I not the power to fly
My own reproaches? shall I be the slave
Of—what? A word! which those of this false world
Employ against each other, not themselves;
As men wear daggers not for self-offence.
But, if I am mistaken, where shall I
Find the disguise to hide me from myself,
As now I skulk from every other eye? [*Exit.*

SCENE II.—*A Hall of Justice.*

CAMILLO, JUDGES, *&c., are discovered seated;* MARZIO *is led in.*

First Judge. Accused, do you persist in your denial?
I ask you, are you innocent or guilty?
I demand who were the participators
In your offence? Speak truth, and the whole truth.

Marzio. My God! I did not kill him; I know nothing;
Olimpio sold the robe to me from which
You would infer my guilt.

Second Judge. Away with him !
First Judge. Dare you, with lips yet white from the rack's kiss,
Speak false? Is it so soft a questioner
That you would bandy lover's talk with it,
Till it wind out your life and soul? Away !
Marzio. Spare me ! Oh spare ! I will confess.
First Judge. Then speak.
Marzio. I strangled him in his sleep.
First Judge. Who urged you to it?
Marzio. His own son Giacomo, and the young prelate
Orsino, sent me to Petrella ; there
The ladies Beatrice and Lucretia
Tempted me with a thousand crowns, and I
And my companion forthwith murdered him.
Now let me die.
First Judge. This sounds as bad as truth.
Guards there, lead forth the prisoners.
Enter LUCRETIA, BEATRICE, *and* GIACOMO, *guarded.*
Look upon
This man. When did you see him last?
Beatrice. We never
Saw him.
Marzio. You know me too well, Lady Beatrice.
Beatrice. I know thee ! How ! where? when?
Marzio. You know 'twas I
Whom you did urge with menaces and bribes
To kill your father. When the thing was done,
You clothed me in a robe of woven gold,
And bade me thrive : how I have thriven you see.
You, my Lord Giacomo, Lady Lucretia,
You know that what I speak is true.
[BEATRICE *advances towards him ; he covers his face, and shrinks back.*
Oh! dart
The terrible resentment of those eyes
On the dead earth ! Turn them away from me—
They wound ! 'Twas torture forced the truth. My lords,
Having said this, let me be led to death.
Beatrice. Poor wretch, I pity thee : yet stay awhile.
Camillo. Guards, lead him not away.
Beatrice. Cardinal Camillo,
You have a good repute for gentleness

And wisdom: can it be that you sit here
To countenance a wicked farce like this?
When some obscure and trembling slave is dragged
From sufferings which might shake the sternest heart,
And bade to answer, not as he believes,
But as those may suspect or do desire
Whose questions thence suggest their own reply,—
And that in peril of such hideous torments
As merciful God spares even the damned! Speak now
The thing you surely know, which is that you,
If your fine frame were stretched upon that wheel,
And you were told, "Confess that you did poison
Your little nephew, that fair blue-eyed child
Who was the lodestar of your life;"—and though
All see, since his most swift and piteous death,
That day and night, and heaven and earth, and time,
And all the things hoped for or done therein,
Are changed to you, through your exceeding grief;—
Yet you would say, "I confess anything,"
And beg from your tormentors, like that slave,
The refuge of dishonourable death.
I pray you, Cardinal, that you assert
My innocence.

Camillo (*much moved*). What shall we think, my lords?
Shame on these tears! I thought the heart was frozen
Which is their fountain. I would pledge my soul
That she is guiltless.

Judge. Yet she must be tortured.

Camillo. I would as soon have tortured mine own nephew
(If he now lived, he would be just her age;
His hair, too, was her colour, and his eyes
Like hers in shape, but blue and not so deep)
As that most perfect image of God's love
That ever came sorrowing upon the earth.
She is as pure as speechless infancy!

Judge. Well, be her purity on your head, my lord,
If you forbid the rack. His Holiness
Enjoined us to pursue this monstrous crime
By the severest forms of law; nay, even
To stretch a point against the criminals.
The prisoners stand accused of parricide,
Upon such evidence as justifies

Torture.'

Beatrice. What evidence? This man's?

Judge. Even so.

Beatrice (*to* MARZIO). Come near. And who art thou thus chosen forth
Out of the multitude of living men
To kill the innocent?

Marzio. I am Marzio,
Thy father's vassal.

Beatrice. Fix thine eyes on mine;
Answer to what I ask. [*Turning to the Judges.*
I prithee mark
His countenance: unlike bold Calumny
Which sometimes dares not speak the thing it looks,
He dares not look the thing he speaks, but bends
His gaze on the blind earth.
(*To* MARZIO.) What! wilt thou say
That I did murder my own father?

Marzio. Oh!
Spare me! My brain swims round—I cannot speak—
It was that horrid torture forced the truth.
Take me away! Let her not look on me!
I am a guilty miserable wretch!
I have said all I know; now, let me die!

Beatrice. My lords, if by my nature I had been
So stern as to have planned the crime alleged
(Which your suspicions dictate to this slave,
And the rack makes him utter), do you think
I should have left this two-edged instrument
Of my misdeed, this man, this bloody knife
With my own name engraven on the heft,
Lying unsheathed amid a world of foes,
For my own death? that, with such horrible need
For deepest silence, I should have neglected
So trivial a precaution as the making
His tomb the keeper of a secret written
On a thief's memory? What is his poor life?
What are a thousand lives? A parricide
Had trampled them like dust; and see, he lives!
[*Turning to* MARZIO.
And thou—

Marzio. Oh spare me! Speak to me no more!

That stern yet piteous look, those solemn tones,
Wound worse than torture.
(*To the Judges.*) I have told it all;
For pity's sake lead me away to death!
Camillo. Guards, lead him nearer the Lady Beatrice.
He shrinks from her regard like autumn's leaf
From the keen breath of the serenest north.
Beatrice. O thou who tremblest on the giddy verge
Of life and death, pause ere thou answerest me;
So mayst thou answer God with less dismay.
What evil have we done thee? I, alas!
Have lived but on this earth a few sad years;
And so my lot was ordered that a father
First turned the moments of awakening life
To drops each poisoning youth's sweet hope; and then
Stabbed with one blow my everlasting soul,
And my untainted fame, and even that peace
Which sleeps within the core of the heart's heart.
But the wound was not mortal; so my hate
Became the only worship I could lift
To our great Father, who in pity and love
Armed thee, as thou dost say, to cut him off;
And thus his wrong becomes my accusation!
And art thou the accuser? If thou hopest
Mercy in heaven, show justice upon earth:
Worse than a bloody hand is a hard heart.
If thou hast done murders, made thy life's path
Over the trampled laws of God and man,
Rush not before thy Judge, and say: "My Maker,
I have done this, and more; for there was one
Who was most pure and innocent on earth;
And, because she endured what never any,
Guilty or innocent, endured before,
Because her wrongs could not be told nor thought,
Because thy hand at length did rescue her,
I with my words killed her and all her kin."
Think, I adjure thee, what it is to slay
The reverence living in the minds of men
Towards our ancient house and stainless fame!
Think what it is to strangle infant Pity,
Cradled in the belief of guileless looks,—
Till it become a crime to suffer. Think

What 'tis to blot with infamy and blood
All that which shows like innocence, and is—
Hear me, great God!—I swear, most innocent;
So that the world lose all discrimination
Between the sly, fierce, wild regard of guilt,
And that which now compels thee to reply
To what I ask: Am I, or am I not
A parricide?

Marzio. Thou art not!

Judge. What is this?

Marzio. I here declare those whom I did accuse
Are innocent. 'Tis I alone am guilty.

Judge. Drag him away to torments; let them be
Subtle and long drawn out, to tear the folds
Of the heart's inmost cell. Unbind him not
Till he confess.

Marzio. Torture me as ye will:
A keener pain has wrung a higher truth
From my last breath. She is most innocent.
Bloodhounds, not men, glut yourselves well with me!
I will not give you that fine piece of nature
To rend and ruin. [*Exit* MARZIO, *guarded.*

Camillo. What say ye now, my lords?

Judge. Let tortures strain the truth till it be white
As snow thrice sifted by the frozen wind.

Camillo. Yet stained with blood.

Judge (*to* BEATRICE). Know you this paper, lady?

Beatrice. Entrap me not with questions. Who stands here
As my accuser? Ha! wilt thou be he,
Who art my judge? Accuser, witness, judge,
What, all in one? Here is Orsino's name;
Where is Orsino? Let his eye meet mine.
What means this scrawl? Alas! ye know not what;
And therefore, on the chance that it may be
Some evil, will ye kill us?

Enter an Officer.

Officer. Marzio's dead.

Judge. What did he say?

Officer. Nothing. As soon as we
Had bound him on the wheel, he smiled on us,
As one who baffles a deep adversary;

And, holding his breath, died.
Judge. There remains nothing
But to apply the question to those prisoners
Who yet remain stubborn.
Camillo. I overrule
Further proceedings, and in the behalf
Of these most innocent and noble persons
Will use my interest with the Holy Father.
Judge. Let the Pope's pleasure then be done. Meanwhile
Conduct these culprits each to separate cells.
And be the engines ready: for, this night—
If the Pope's resolution be as grave,
Pious, and just, as once—I 'll wring the truth
Out of those nerves and sinews, groan by groan. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE III.—*The Cell of a Prison.* BEATRICE *is discovered asleep on a couch.*

Enter BERNARDO.

Bernardo. How gently slumber rests upon her face,
Like the last thoughts of some day sweetly spent,
Closing in night and dreams, and so prolonged!
After such torments as she bore last night,
How light and soft her breathing comes! Ah me!
Methinks that I shall never sleep again.
But I must shake the heavenly dew of rest
From this sweet folded flower, thus—wake! awake!
What, sister, canst thou sleep?
Beatrice (*awaking*). I was just dreaming
That we were all in paradise. Thou knowest
This cell seems like a kind of paradise
After our father's presence.
Bernardo. Dear, dear sister,
Would that thy dream were not a dream! O God!
How shall I tell?
Beatrice. What wouldst thou tell, sweet brother?
Bernardo. Look not so calm and happy, or, even whilst
I stand considering what I have to say,
My heart will break!
Beatrice. See now, thou mak'st me weep.
How very friendless thou wouldst be, dear child,
If I were dead. Say what thou hast to say.

Bernardo. They have confessed; they could endure no more
The tortures—

Beatrice. Ha! What was there to confess?
They must have told some weak and wicked lie
To flatter their tormentors. Have they said
That they were guilty? O white Innocence,
That thou shouldst wear the mask of guilt to hide
Thine awful and serenest countenance
From those who know thee not!

Enter JUDGE, *with* LUCRETIA *and* GIACOMO, *guarded.*

Ignoble hearts!
For some brief spasms of pain, which are at least
As mortal as the limbs through which they pass,
Are centuries of high splendour laid in dust?
And that eternal honour which should live
Sunlike above the reek of mortal fame
Changed to a mockery and a by-word? What!
Will you give up these bodies to be dragged
At horses' heels, so that our hair should sweep
The footsteps of the vain and senseless crowd,
Who, that they may make our calamity
Their worship and their spectacle, will leave
The churches and the theatres as void
As their own hearts? Shall the light multitude
Fling, at their choice, curses or faded pity,
Sad funeral flowers to deck a living corpse,
Upon us as we pass, to pass away,
And leave—what memory of our having been?
Infamy, blood, terror, despair! O thou
Who wert a mother to the parentless,
Kill not thy child! Let not her wrongs kill thee!
Brother, lie down with me upon the rack,
And let us each be silent as a corpse;
It soon will be as soft as any grave.
'Tis but the falsehood it can wring from fear
Makes the rack cruel.

Giacomo. They will tear the truth
Even from thee at last, those cruel pains:
For pity's sake, say thou art guilty now.

Lucretia. Oh speak the truth! Let us all quickly die:
And after death God is our judge, not they;

He will have mercy on us.
Bernardo. If indeed
It can be true, say so, dear sister mine;
And then the Pope will surely pardon you,
And all be well.
Judge. Confess, or I will warp
Your limbs with such keen tortures—
Beatrice. Tortures! Turn
The rack henceforth into a spinning-wheel!
Torture your dog, that he may tell when last
He lapped the blood his master shed—not me!
My pangs are of the mind and of the heart
And of the soul: ay, of the inmost soul,
Which weeps within tears as of burning gall
To see, in this ill world where none are true,
My kindred false to their deserted selves;
And with considering all the wretched life
Which I have lived, and its now wretched end;
And the small justice shown by Heaven and Earth
To me or mine; and what a tyrant thou art,
And what slaves these; and what a world we make,
The oppressor and the oppressed—Such pangs compel
My answer. What is it thou wouldst with me?
Judge. Art thou not guilty of thy father's death?
Beatrice. Or wilt thou rather tax high-judging God
That he permitted such an act as that
Which I have suffered, and which he beheld;
Made it unutterable, and took from it
All refuge, all revenge, all consequence,
But that which thou hast called my father's death?
Which is or is not what men call a crime,
Which either I have done, or have not done;
Say what ye will. I shall deny no more.
If ye desire it thus, thus let it be—
And so an end of all. Now do your will;
No other pains shall force another word.
Judge. She is convicted, but has not confessed.
Be it enough. Until their final sentence,
Let none have converse with them. You, young lord,
Linger not here.
Beatrice. Oh tear him not away!
Judge. Guards! do your duty.

Bernardo (*embracing* BEATRICE). Oh! would ye divide
Body from soul?
Officer. That is the headsman's business.
[*Exeunt all but* LUCRETIA, BEATRICE, *and* GIACOMO.
Giacomo. Have I confessed? Is it all over now?
No hope? no refuge? O weak wicked tongue
Which hast destroyed me, would that thou hadst been
Cut out and thrown to dogs first! To have killed
My father first, and then betrayed my sister—
Ay, thee! the one thing innocent and pure
In this black guilty world—to that which I
So well deserve! My wife! my little ones!
Destitute, helpless; and I—Father! God!
Canst thou forgive even the unforgiving,
When their full hearts break thus, thus?—
[*Covers his face and weeps.*
Lucretia. Oh my child!
To what a dreadful end are we all come!
Why did I yield? Why did I not sustain
Those torments? Oh that I were all dissolved
Into these fast and unavailing tears,
Which flow and feel not!
Beatrice. What 'twas weak to do
'Tis weaker to lament, once being done.
Take cheer! The God who knew my wrong, and made
Our speedy act the angel of his wrath,
Seems, and but seems, to have abandoned us.
Let us not think that we shall die for this.
Brother, sit near me; give me your firm hand,
You had a manly heart. Bear up! bear up!
Oh! dearest lady, put your gentle head
Upon my lap, and try to sleep awhile:
Your eyes look pale, hollow, and overworn,
With heaviness of watching and slow grief.
Come, I will sing you some low sleepy tune,
Not cheerful nor yet sad; some dull old thing,
Some outworn and unused monotony,
Such as our country gossips sing and spin,
Till they almost forget they live. Lie down!
So; that will do. Have I forgot the words?
Faith! they are sadder than I thought they were.

"False friend, wilt thou smile or weep
When my life is laid asleep?
Little cares for a smile or a tear
The clay-cold corpse upon the bier.
Farewell! Heigh ho!
What is this whispers low?
There is a snake in thy smile, my dear,
And bitter poison within thy tear.

"Sweet sleep! were death like to thee,
Or if thou couldst mortal be,
I would close these eyes of pain,
When to wake? Never again.
O world! farewell!
Listen to the passing bell!
It says, thou and I must part,
With a light and a heavy heart."

[*The scene closes.*

SCENE IV.—*A Hall of the Prison.*

Enter CAMILLO *and* BERNARDO.

Camillo. The Pope is stern; not to be moved or bent.
He looked as calm and keen as is the engine
Which tortures and which kills, exempt itself
From aught that it inflicts; a marble form,
A rite, a law, a custom; not a man.
He frowned, as if to frown had been the trick
Of his machinery, on the advocates
Presenting the defences, which he tore
And threw behind, muttering with hoarse harsh voice:
"Which among ye defended their old father
Killed in his sleep?" Then to another: "Thou
Dost this in virtue of thy place; 'tis well."
He turned to me then looking deprecation,
And said these three words coldly: "They must die."

Bernardo. And yet you left him not?

Camillo. I urged him still;
Pleading, as I could guess, the devilish wrong
Which prompted your unnatural parent's death.
And he replied; "Paolo Santa Croce
Murdered his mother yester evening,
And he is fled. Parricide grows so rife
That soon, for some just cause no doubt, the young
Will strangle us all, dozing in our chairs.
Authority and power and hoary hair
Are grown crimes capital. You are my nephew,—

You come to ask their pardon. Stay a moment;
Here is their sentence; never see me more,
Till to the letter it be all fulfilled."
Bernardo. O God, not so! I did believe indeed
That all you said was but sad preparation
For happy news. Oh there are words and looks
To bend the sternest purpose! Once I knew them;
Now I forget them at my dearest need.
What think you if I seek him out, and bathe
His feet and robe with hot and bitter tears?
Importune him with prayers, vexing his brain
With my perpetual cries, until in rage
He strike me with his pastoral cross, and trample
Upon my prostrate head so that my blood
May stain the senseless dust on which he treads,
And remorse waken mercy? I will do it!
Oh wait till I return! [*Rushes out.*
Camillo. Alas! poor boy!
A wreck-devoted seaman thus might pray
To the deaf sea.

Enter LUCRETIA, BEATRICE, *and* GIACOMO, *guarded.*
Beatrice. I hardly dare to fear
That thou bring'st other news than a just pardon.
Camillo. May God in heaven be less inexorable
To the Pope's prayers than he has been to mine!
Here is the sentence and the warrant.
Beatrice (*wildly*). Oh
My God! Can it be possible I have
To die so suddenly? so young to go
Under the obscure, cold, rotting, wormy ground?
To be nailed down into a narrow place;
To see no more sweet sunshine; hear no more
Blithe voice of living thing; muse not again
Upon familiar thoughts,—sad, yet thus lost
How fearful! To be nothing! or to be—
What? Oh where am I? Let me not go mad!
Sweet Heaven, forgive weak thoughts! If there should be
No God, no heaven, no earth, in the void world,
The wide, grey, lampless, deep, unpeopled world!
If all things then should be my father's spirit,
His eye, his voice, his touch, surrounding me,

The atmosphere and breath of my dead life!
If sometimes, as a shape more like himself,
Even the form which tortured me on earth,
Masked in grey hairs and wrinkles, he should come,
And wind me in his hellish arms, and fix
His eyes on mine, and drag me down, down, down!
For was he not alone omnipotent
On earth, and ever present? Even though dead
Does not his spirit live in all that breathe,
And work for me and mine still the same ruin,
Scorn, pain, despair? Who ever yet returned
To teach the laws of Death's untrodden realm?
Unjust perhaps as those which drive us now,
Oh whither, whither?

Lucretia. Trust in God's sweet love,
The tender promises of Christ: ere night
Think we shall be in paradise.

Beatrice. . . . 'Tis past!
Whatever comes, my heart shall sink no more.
And yet, I know not why, your words strike chill.
How tedious, false, and cold, seem all things! I
Have met with much injustice in this world;
No difference has been made by God or man,
Or any power moulding my wretched lot,
'Twixt good or evil, as regarded me.
I am cut off from the only world I know,
From light and life and love, in youth's sweet prime.
You do well telling me to trust in God;
I hope I do trust in him: in whom else
Can any trust? And yet my heart is cold.

[*During the latter speeches* GIACOMO *has retired conversing with* CAMILLO, *who now goes out;* GIACOMO *advances.*

Giacomo. Know you not, mother—sister, know you not?
Bernardo even now is gone to implore
The Pope to grant our pardon.

Lucretia. Child, perhaps
It will be granted! We may all then live
To make these woes a tale for distant years.
Oh what a thought! It gushes to my heart
Like the warm blood.

Beatrice. Yet both will soon be cold.
Oh trample out that thought! Worse than despair,

Worse than the bitterness of death, is hope:
It is the only ill which can find place
Upon the giddy, sharp, and narrow hour
Tottering beneath us. Plead with the swift frost
That it should spare the eldest flower of Spring:
Plead with awakening earthquake, o'er whose couch
Even now a city stands, strong, fair, and free—
Now stench and blackness yawn, like death: oh plead
With famine or wind-walking pestilence,
Blind lightning or the deaf sea;—not with man!
Cruel, cold, formal man; righteous in words,
In deeds a Cain! No, mother, we must die:
Since such is the reward of innocent lives,
Such the alleviation of worst wrongs.
And, whilst our murderers live, and hard cold men,
Smiling and slow, walk through a world of tears
To death as to life's sleep, 'twere just the grave
Were some strange joy for us. Come, obscure Death,
And wind me in thine all-embracing arms!
Like a fond mother hide me in thy bosom,
And rock me to the sleep from which none wake!
Live, ye who live, subject to one another,
As we were once, who now—

BERNARDO *rushes in.*

Bernardo. Oh horrible!
That tears, that looks, that hope poured forth in prayer
Even till the heart is vacant and despairs,
Should all be vain! The ministers of death
Are waiting round the doors. I thought I saw
Blood on the face of one.—What if 'twere fancy?
Soon the heart's blood of all I love on earth
Will sprinkle him, and he will wipe it off
As if 'twere only rain. O life! O world!
Cover me! let me be no more! To see
That perfect mirror of pure innocence,
Wherein I gazed, and grew happy and good,
Shivered to dust! To see thee, Beatrice,
Who mad'st all lovely thou didst look upon—
Thee, light of life—dead, dark! while I say "Sister,"
To hear I have no sister! And thou, mother,
Whose love was as a bond to all our loves—
Dead—the sweet bond broken!

Enter CAMILLO *and Guards.*

They come! Let me
Kiss those warm lips before their crimson leaves
Are blighted—white—cold. Say farewell, before
Death chokes that gentle voice! Oh let me hear
You speak!

Beatrice. Farewell, my tender brother. Think
Of our sad fate with gentleness, as now:
And let mild pitying thoughts lighten for thee
Thy sorrow's load. Err not in harsh despair,
But tears and patience. One thing more, my child:
For thine own sake be constant to the love
Thou bearest us; and to the faith that I,
Though wrapped in a strange cloud of crime and shame,
Lived ever holy and unstained. And, though
Ill tongues shall wound me, and our common name
Be as a mark stamped on thine innocent brow
For men to point at as they pass, do thou
Forbear, and never think a thought unkind
Of those who perhaps love thee in their graves.
So mayst thou die as I do, fear and pain
Being subdued. Farewell! farewell! farewell!

Bernardo. I cannot say farewell!

Camillo. Oh Lady Beatrice!

Beatrice. Give yourself no unnecessary pain,
My dear Lord Cardinal.—Here, mother, tie
My girdle for me, and bind up this hair
In any simple knot: ay, that does well.
And yours, I see, is coming down. How often
Have we done this for one another! now
We shall not do it any more. My lord,
We are quite ready. Well, 'tis very well.

NOTE ON THE CENCI, BY MRS. SHELLEY.

THE sort of mistake that Shelley made as to the extent of his own genius and powers, which led him deviously at first, but lastly into the direct tract that enabled him fully to develop them, is a curious instance of his modesty of feeling, and of the methods which the human mind uses at once to deceive itself, and yet, in its very delusion, to make its way out of error into the path which Nature has marked out as its right one. He often incited me to attempt the writing a tragedy: he conceived that I

possessed some dramatic talent, and he was always most earnest and energetic in his exhortations that I should cultivate any talent I possessed, to the utmost. I entertained a truer estimate of my powers; and above all (though at that time not exactly aware of the fact) I was far too young to have any chance of succeeding, even moderately, in a species of composition that requires a greater scope of experience in, and sympathy with, human passion than could then have fallen to my lot,—or than any perhaps, except Shelley, ever possessed, even at the age of twenty-six, at which he wrote *The Cenci*.

On the other hand, Shelley most erroneously conceived himself to be destitute of this talent. He believed that one of the first requisites was the capacity of forming and following up a story or plot. He fancied himself to be defective in this portion of imagination: it was that which gave him least pleasure in the writings of others, though he laid great store by it, as the proper framework to support the sublimest efforts of poetry. He asserted that he was too metaphysical and abstract, too fond of the theoretical and the ideal, to succeed as a tragedian. It perhaps is not strange that I shared this opinion with himself; for he had hitherto shown no inclination for, nor given any specimen of his powers in, framing and supporting the interest of a story, either in prose or verse. Once or twice, when he attempted such, he had speedily thrown it aside, as being even disagreeable to him as an occupation.

The subject he had suggested for a tragedy was Charles I.; and he had written to me; "Remember, remember Charles I. I have been already imagining how you would conduct some scenes. The second volume of *St. Leon* begins with this proud and true sentiment, 'There is nothing which the human mind can conceive which it may not execute.' Shakspeare was only a human being." These words were written in 1818, while we were in Lombardy, when he little thought how soon a work of his own would prove a proud comment on the passage he quoted. When in Rome, in 1819, a friend put into our hands the old manuscript account of the story of the Cenci. We visited the Colonna and Doria palaces, where the portraits of Beatrice were to be found; and her beauty cast the reflection of its own grace over her appalling story. Shelley's imagination became strongly excited, and he urged the subject to me as one fitted for a tragedy. More than ever, I felt my incompetence; but I entreated him to write it instead; and he began and proceeded swiftly, urged on by intense sympathy with the sufferings of the human beings whose passions, so long cold in the tomb, he revived, and gifted with poetic language. This tragedy is the only one of his works that he communicated to me during its progress. We talked over the arrangement of the scenes together. I speedily saw the great mistake we had made, and triumphed in the discovery of the new talent brought to light from that mine of wealth (never, alas! through his untimely death, worked to its depths) his richly-gifted mind.

We suffered a severe affliction in Rome by the loss of our eldest child, who was of such beauty and promise as to cause him deservedly to be the idol of our hearts. We left the capital of the world, anxious for a time to escape a spot associated too intimately with his presence and loss.* Some friends of ours were residing in the neighbourhood of Leghorn, and we took a small house, Villa Valsovano, about half-way between the town and Monte Nero, where we remained during the summer.

* Such feelings haunted him when, in *The Cenci*, he makes Beatrice speak to Cardinal Camillo of

> "that fair blue-eyed child
> Who was the lodestar of your life"—

and say—

> "All see, since his most swift and piteous death,
> That day and night, and heaven and earth, and time,
> And all the things hoped for or done therein,
> Are changed to you, through your exceeding grief."

Our villa was situated in the midst of a *podere;* the peasants sang as they worked beneath our windows, during the heats of a very hot season, and in the evening the water-wheel creaked as the process of irrigation went on, and the fire-flies flashed from among the myrtle hedges:—nature was bright, sunshiny, and cheerful, or diversified by storms of a majestic terror such as we had never before witnessed.

At the top of the house there was a sort of terrace. There is often such in Italy, generally roofed: this one was very small, yet not only roofed but glazed. This Shelley made his study; it looked out on a wide prospect of fertile country, and commanded a view of the near sea. The storms that sometimes varied our day showed themselves most picturesquely as they were driven across the ocean; sometimes the dark lurid clouds dipped towards the waves, and became water-spouts, that churned up the waters beneath, as they were chased onward and scattered by the tempest. At other times the dazzling sunlight and heat made it almost intolerable to every other; but Shelley basked in both, and his health and spirits revived under their influence. In this airy cell he wrote the principal part of *The Cenci.* He was making a study of Calderon at the time, reading his best tragedies with an accomplished lady living near us, to whom his letter from Leghorn was addressed during the following year. He admired Calderon, both for his poetry and his dramatic genius; but it shows his judgment and originality that, though greatly struck by his first acquaintance with the Spanish poet, none of his peculiarities crept into the composition of *The Cenci;* and there is no trace of his new studies, except in that passage to which he himself alludes as suggested by one in *El Purgatorio de San Patricio.*

Shelley wished *The Cenci* to be acted. He was not a playgoer, being of such fastidious taste that he was easily disgusted by the bad filling-up of the inferior parts. While preparing for our departure from England, however, he saw Miss O'Neil several times. She was then in the zenith of her glory; and Shelley was deeply moved by her impersonation of several parts, and by the graceful sweetness, the intense pathos, and sublime vehemence of passion, she displayed. She was often in his thoughts as he wrote; and, when he had finished, he became anxious that his tragedy should be acted, and receive the advantage of having this accomplished actress to fill the part of the heroine. With this view he wrote the following letter to a friend in London:—

"The object of the present letter is to ask a favour of you. I have written a tragedy on a story well known in Italy, and, in my conception, eminently dramatic. I have taken some pains to make my play fit for representation, and those who have already seen it judge favourably. It is written without any of the peculiar feelings and opinions which characterize my other compositions; I have attended simply to the impartial development of such characters as it is probable the persons represented really were, together with the greatest degree of popular effect to be produced by such a development. I send you a translation of the Italian MS. on which my play is founded; the chief circumstance of which I have touched very delicately; for my principal doubt as to whether it would succeed as an acting play hangs entirely on the question as to whether any such a thing as incest in this shape, however treated, would be admitted on the stage. I think, however, it will form no objection; considering, first, that the facts are matter of history, and, secondly, the peculiar delicacy with which I have treated it.*

"I am exceedingly interested in the question of whether this attempt of mine will succeed or not. I am strongly inclined to the affirmative at present; founding my

* In speaking of his mode of treating this main incident, Shelley said that it might be remarked that, in the course of the play, he had never mentioned expressly Cenci's worst crime. Every one knew what it must be, but it was never imaged in words—the nearest allusion to it being that portion of Cenci's curse, beginning,

"That, if she have a child," &c.

hopes on this—that, as a composition, it is certainly not inferior to any of the modern plays that have been acted, with the exception of *Remorse;* that the interest of the plot is incredibly greater and more real; and that there is nothing beyond what the multitude are contented to believe that they can understand, either in imagery, opinion, or sentiment. I wish to preserve a complete incognito, and can trust to you that, whatever else you do, you will at least favour me on this point. Indeed, this is essential, deeply essential, to its success. After it had been acted, and successfully (could I hope for such a thing), I would own it if I pleased, and use the celebrity it might acquire to my own purposes."

"What I want you to do is to procure for me its presentation at Covent Garden. The principal character, Beatrice, is precisely fitted for Miss O'Neil, and it might even seem to have been written for her; (God forbid that I should see her play it—it would tear my nerves to pieces); and in all respects it is fitted only for Covent Garden. The chief male character I confess I should be very unwilling that any one but Kean should play. That is impossible, and I must be contented with an inferior actor."

The play was accordingly sent to Mr. Harris. He pronounced the subject to be so objectionable that he could not even submit the part to Miss O'Neil for perusal, but expressed his desire that the author would write a tragedy on some other subject, which he would gladly accept. Shelley printed a small edition at Leghorn, to ensure its correctness; as he was much annoyed by the many mistakes that crept into his text when distance prevented him from correcting the press.

Universal approbation soon stamped *The Cenci* as the best tragedy of modern times. Writing concerning it, Shelley said: "I have been cautious to avoid the introducing faults of youthful composition; diffuseness, a profusion of inapplicable imagery, vagueness, generality, and, as Hamlet says, *words, words.*" There is nothing that is not purely dramatic throughout; and the character of Beatrice, proceeding, from vehement struggle, to horror, to deadly resolution, and lastly to the elevated dignity of calm suffering, joined to passionate tenderness and pathos, is touched with hues so vivid and so beautiful that the poet seems to have read intimately the secrets of the noble heart imaged in the lovely countenance of the unfortunate girl. The Fifth Act is a masterpiece. It is the finest thing he ever wrote, and may claim proud comparison not only with any contemporary but preceding poet. The varying feelings of Beatrice are expressed with passionate, heart-reaching eloquence. Every character has a voice that echoes truth in its tones. It is curious, to one acquainted with the written story, to mark the success with which the poet has inwoven the real incidents of the tragedy into his scenes, and yet, through the power of poetry, has obliterated all that would otherwise have shown too harsh or too hideous in the picture. His success was a double triumph; and often after he was earnestly entreated to write again in a style that commanded popular favour, while it was not less instinct with truth and genius. But the bent of his mind went the other way; and, even when employed on subjects whose interest depended on character and incident, he would start off in another direction, and leave the delineations of human passion, which he could depict in so able a manner, for fantastic creations of his fancy, or the expression of those opinions and sentiments, with regard to human nature and its destiny, a desire to diffuse which was the master passion of his soul.

NOTES BY W. M. ROSSETTI.

P. xxii.

"A WISE friend once wrote to Shelley," &c.

This was Godwin. Letter of 4th March, 1812, cited by Mr Jefferson Hogg.

P. xxii.

"He had not completed his nine-and-twentieth year when he died."

Mrs. Shelley speaks inadvertently here. Shelley, born on 8th August 1792, an dying on 8th July 1822, was all but thirty years of age.

P. xxiv.

To the Queen of my Heart.

This piece may still be looked up by the curious in Captain Medwin's *Shelley Papers;* a small gleaning of Shelley's writings, with a memoir, published in the *Athenæum* in 1832, and next year in a volume. It begins

> "Shall we roam, my love,
> To the twilight grove"—

and is certainly very poor stuff. Yet there are some lines which seem to have a twang of Shelley in a faint way; especially

> "And thy beauty, more bright
> Than the stars' soft light,
> Shall seem *as a weft from the sky.*"

For my own part, I could imagine it equally possible that these lines were either a very characterless and almost a casual imitation of Shelley, or that the poem was a veritable but worthless product of his juvenility. Certain it is that he then wrote many still more trashy, as our Appendix will show. The authority of Captain Medwin, who knew Shelley from childhood, is not to be altogether disregarded.—*Notes and Queries*, vol. viii., No. 195 (1853), published a poem of moderate length named *The Calm*, attributed to Shelley, and originally printed in a South Carolina newspaper in 1839, coming professedly from Mr. Trelawny in the first instance. It is a rambling sort of tirade, in which one refuses, as if by instinct, to believe. There is strong internal evidence of its American authorship; and Mr. Trelawny tells me positively that he knows nothing about it.

P. 1.

Queen Mab.

This poem was written by Shelley, according to his own account,* at the age of

* See his letter, p. 92.

eighteen (say between August 1810 and August 1811), and by him privately printed about the same time—not published, though he had originally thought of publishing it. The private volume, dated 1813, bears Shelley's own name as printer; and has three mottoes—from Voltaire (Ecrasez l'Infâme), from Lucretius, and from Archimedes, the last the same which he gave to *Laon and Cythna*. However, Shelley's statement of the period of composition is incorrect; for letters printed by Mr. Jefferson Hogg show indisputably that the poem was begun towards April 1812, and finished, with its Notes, in 1813, when the poet was between twenty and twenty-one years of age. *Queen Mab* was published by a piratical trader soon after it had been privately printed; and was again piratically published in 1821 by a Strand bookseller, Clarke, against whose misdeed Shelley protested (see Mrs. Shelley's *Note on Queen Mab*, p. 89). Meanwhile the author had in 1816 issued the volume named *Alastor or the Spirit of Solitude, and other Poems*. In this volume the concluding poem is entitled *The Dæmon of the World*, and consists (substantially) of the 1st section of *Queen Mab*, and about half the 2nd section, with continual verbal alterations.

An editor who endeavours at the present day to produce a critical edition of Shelley has to bear these facts in mind, and finds the option before him a rather embarrassing one. Shelley, when extra young, printed *Queen Mab*, and afterwards saw or surmised it to be rubbish (though it is certainly not *unmitigated* rubbish). At a less immature age he published a modified extract from the poem. The alterations of diction which he introduced with no sparing hand manifestly represent his own deliberate preference, and ought so far to be respected and adopted in any republication: but then they are alterations introduced into a mere extract of the entire poem, and one cannot be quite sure that, if Shelley had been re-printing the complete and not the abridged version, he would have made all the changes given in the latter. Moreover, through extraneous agency, the unabridged and unaltered *Queen Mab* has been restored to the body of Shelley's works, and must henceforth remain there. Unabridged it must remain: shall it also remain unaltered? or rather verbally altered according to the pattern of *the Dæmon of the World*?

It appears to me that, on the whole, the best course to pursue is that which the present edition exhibits, and which may be thus summarized:

1. *Every* alteration given in *the Dæmon of the World* is not here adopted; but *some* alterations, which seem to me very decided improvements, have been adopted, and are (when of sufficient importance) indicated in the notes, along with some of the remaining and unused alterations:

2. The concluding passage of *the Dæmon of the World*, being a sort of summarized abstract of what *Queen Mab* proceeds to set forth at far greater length, cannot be incorporated in that poem. Neither ought it to be entirely passed over. It is therefore given in the Appendix.

By this method I trust to have fairly reconciled the necessity (for such I consider it) of giving *Queen Mab* entire, and not far different from the version now long familiar to readers of Shelley, with the rival necessity of adopting the poet's own revisions: and this without cumbering our edition with the whole of *the Dæmon of the World* following the whole of *Queen Mab*.

There is another source of variations to *Queen Mab* which it will be proper to mention here; I have, however, only in one instance availed myself of it for the text. Mr. Middleton's *Life of Shelley* (vol. i., p. 256) refers to a copy of the poem containing many emendations in Shelley's own hand-writing. "The volume which Shelley revised, and enriched with many additions and corrections, was left at Marlow, where it had been thrown aside, and no doubt forgotten, among the many anxieties he was there subject to. It fell afterwards into the hands of a gentleman attached to the Owenites, and has been ever since carefully concealed from the eyes of the world. As the poem stands in the original, its doctrines exactly accord with their tenets, and it is to a considerable extent the Gospel of the Owenites; while those revisions and

erasures would have produced it in a very modified form." The few specimens which Mr. Middleton gives of the emendations in this copy will be cited in the present Notes, unless identical (as they sometimes are) with the passages in *the Dæmon of the World.*

(In subsequent references, I shall, for brevity's sake, use *Q. M.* for *Queen Mab*, and *D. W.* for *Dæmon of the World*).

P. 2.

"The other, rosy as the morn."

(*D. W.*) "The other glowing like the vital morn."

In the copy cited by Mr. Middleton, "the vital *day*;" and close afterwards (same copy)

"Yet both *so strange* and wonderful."

P. 2.

"Hath then the gloomy power," to
"Light, life, and rapture, from her smile."

(*D. W.*) "Hath then the iron-sceptred skeleton
Whose reign is in the tainted sepulchres
To the hell-dogs that couch beneath his throne
Cast that fair prey? Must that divinest form *
Which love and admiration cannot view
Without a beating heart, whose azure veins
Steal like dark streams along a field of snow,
Whose outline is as fair as marble clothed
In light of some sublimest mind, decay?
Nor putrefaction's breath
Leave aught of this pure spectacle
But loathsomeness and ruin—
Spare aught but a dark theme
On which the lightest heart might moralize?
Or is it but that downy-winged Slumbers
Have charmed their nurse coy Silence near her lids
To watch their own repose?
Will they, when morning's beam
Flows through those wells of light,
Seek, far from noise and day, some western cave
Where woods and streams with soft and pausing winds
A lulling murmur weave?"

P. 2.

"Yes! she will wake again," to
"Or thawed the cold heart of a conqueror."

(*D. W.*) "Ianthe doth not sleep
The dreamless sleep of death;
Nor in her moonlight chamber silently
Doth Henry hear her regular pulses throb,
Or mark her delicate cheek
With interchange of hues mock the broad moon,
Outwatching weary night,
Without assured reward."

* (*Q. M.*) "Must then that peerless form."

P. 2.

"And on their lids, whose texture fine
Scarce hides the dark-blue orbs beneath."

(*D. W.*) "On their translucent lids, whose texture fine
Scarce hides the dark blue orbs that burn below
With unapparent fire."

P. 3.

"'Tis like a wondrous strain that sweeps," to
"Floating on waves of music and of light."

(*Q. M.*) "'Tis like the wondrous strain
That round a lonely ruin swells,
Which, wandering on the echoing shore,
The enthusiast hears at evening.
'Tis softer than the west wind's sigh,
'Tis wilder than the unmeasured notes
Of that strange lyre whose strings
The genii of the breezes sweep.
Those lines of rainbow light
Are like the moonbeams when they fall
Through some cathedral window; but the teints
Are such as may not find
Comparison on earth."

P. 3.

"Behold the chariot of the Fairy Queen," to
"Upon the slumbering maid."

(*D. W.*) "The chariot of the Dæmon of the World
Descends in silent power.
Its shape reposed within. . . .
. . . . . .
Four shapeless shadows bright and beautiful
Draw that strange car of glory; reins of light
Check their unearthly speed. They stop, and fold
Their wings of braided air.
The Dæmon, leaning from the etherial car,
Gazed on the slumbering maid."

These I regard as better lines than the corresponding ones in *Q. M.*: but the terms "Dæmon of the World," "four shapeless shadows," &c., are inadmissible into our text—being proper to a different context.—The word "pennons" in the *Q. M.* passage is Shelley's own, evidently used as equivalent to "pinions:" I almost think it would have been justifiable to alter this word in our edition.

P. 3.

"Human eye hath ne'er beheld," to
"Hung like a mist of light."

(*Q. M.*) "Oh! not the visioned poet in his dreams,
When silvery clouds float through the wildered brain,
When every sight of lovely, wild, and grand,
Astonishes, enraptures, elevates—
When fancy at a glance combines
The wondrous and the beautiful—

So bright, so fair, so wild a shape
Hath ever yet beheld
As that which reined the coursers of the air,
And poured the magic of her gaze
Upon the sleeping maid."

P. 3.

"The broad and yellow moon," to
"That filled the lonely dwelling."

These verses are not in the *D. W.*—I doubt whether their omission from *Q. M.* would be any detriment: but as the sequence of lines in the *D. W.* is somewhat altered from *Q. M.*, and cannot be exactly reproduced in our text, it might perhaps be urged that the verses in question were dropped out rather than purposely rejected from the *D. W.*, and I therefore do not presume to meddle with them here.

P. 3.

"Slight as some cloud," to
"Its transitory robe."

(*Q. M.*) "Yon fibrous cloud
That catches but the palest tinge of even,
And which the straining eye can hardly seize
When melting into eastern twilight's shadow,
Were scarce so thin, so slight: but the fair star
That gems the glittering coronet of morn
Sheds not a light so mild, so powerful,
As that which, bursting from the Fairy's form,
Spread a purpureal halo round the scene,
Yet with an undulating motion
Swayed to her outline gracefully."

The line just quoted,

"Swayed to her outline gracefully,"

is followed in *Q. M.* by the following—

"From her celestial car
The Fairy Queen descended,
And thrice she waved her wand
Circled with wreaths of amaranth."

But these lines are omitted in the *D. W.*, and superseded by one on our p. 3, thence adopted—

"Waving a starry wand."

P. 4.

"Such sounds as breathed around like odorous winds
Of wakening Spring arose,
Filling the chamber and the midnight sky."

(*Q. M.*) "And the clear silver tones,
As thus she spoke, were such
As are unheard by all but gifted ear."

P. 4.

"Maiden, the world's supremest Spirit," to
"Earth's unsubstantial mimicry."

This rhymed lyric—the best thing, to my apprehension, in either form of the poem—is from the *D. W.* Instead of it, *Q. M.* gives:

"Stars! your balmiest influence shed!
Elements! your wrath suspend!
Sleep, Ocean, in the rocky bounds
That circle thy domain!
Let not a breath be seen to stir
Around yon grass-grown ruin's height,—
Let even the restless gossamer
Sleep on the moveless air!
Soul of Ianthe, thou
Judged alone worthy of the envied boon
That waits the good and the sincere; that waits
Those who have struggled, and with resolute will
Vanquished earth's pride and meanness, burst the chains,
The icy chains, of custom, and have shone
The day-stars of their age;—soul of Ianthe!
Awake, arise!"

P. 5.

"It ceased: and from the mute and moveless frame
A radiant Spirit rose,
All beautiful in naked purity."

(*Q. M.*) "Sudden arose
Ianthe's soul: it stood
All beautiful in naked purity,
The perfect semblance of its bodily frame."

P. 5.

"Instinct with inexpressible beauty and grace," to
"The Fairy and the Soul proceeded." (P. 6.)

The whole of this passage is omitted from the *D. W.* I cannot profess that the poetical reader would lose much if it had vanished also from our *Q. M.*: but parts of it are manifestly an integral portion of the longer poem, not rightly omissible, and on the whole it has appeared to me best to leave the entire passage untouched.

P. 6.

"The silver clouds disparted," to
"Bade them pursue their way."

(*D. W.*) "Disparting as it went the silver clouds,
It moved towards the car, and took its seat
Beside the Dæmon shape.
Obedient to the sweep of airy song,
The mighty ministers
Unfurled their prismy wings."

P. 7.

"The eastern wave grew pale
With the first smile of morn."

(*Q. M.*) "Just o'er the eastern wave
Peeped the first faint smile of morn."

P. 7.

"From the celestial hoofs."

(*D. W.*) "From the swift sweep of wings."

It will be observed throughout that, in *Q. M.*, the car is drawn by *horses*; in the *D. W.*, by undefined spirits of some sort.

P. 7.

"That cradled in their folds the infant dawn."

(*Q. M.*) "That canopied the dawn."

P. 7.

"Appeared a vast and shadowy sphere," to
"Its rays of rapid light."

(*D. W.*) "Appeared a vast and shadowy sphere, suspended
In the black concave of heaven
With the sun's cloudless orb,
Whose rays of rapid light," &c.

P. 8.

"It was a sight of wonder: some," to
"Like worlds to death and ruin driven."

(*D. W.*) "It was a sight of wonder. Some were horned,
And like the moon's argentine crescent hung
In the dark dome of heaven: some did shed
A clear mild beam, like Hesperus while the sea
Yet glows with fading sunlight: others dashed
Athwart the night with trains of bickering fire,
Like spherèd worlds to death and ruin driven."

P. 8.

"Thou must have marked the braided webs of gold
That without motion hang
Over the sinking sphere."

(*Q. M.*) "Thou must have marked the lines
Of purple gold that motionless
Hung o'er the sinking sphere."

P. 9.

"Above the burning deep."

(*Q. M.*) "Crowned with a diamond wreath."

P. 9.

"When those far clouds of feathery purple gleam."

(*Q. M.*) "When those far clouds of feathery gold,
Shaded with deepest purple, gleam."

P. 9.

"That gleam amid yon flood of purple light."

(*Q. M.*) "Gleaming in yon flood of light."

P. 9.

"That canopy the sun's resplendent couch."

(*Q. M.*) "Stretching o'er the sun's bright couch."

P. 9.

"As Mab's etherial palace could afford."

In the *D. W.*, the line corresponding to the above is followed by four which have no equivalents in *Q. M.*, and which appear to me of dubious benefit:—

"The elements of all that human thought
Can frame of lovely or sublime did join
To rear the fabric of the fane, nor aught
Of earth may image forth its majesty."

P. 9.

"Its vast and azure dome."

Here follows, in *Q. M.*, the couplet—

"Its fertile golden islands
Floating on a silver sea."

This is omitted in the *D. W.*: indeed, the meaning of the couplet is not very clear.

P. 9.

"And, on the verge of that obscure abyss," to
"Their lustre through its adamantine gates."

(*Q. M.*) "Whilst suns their mingling beamings darted
Through clouds of circumambient darkness,
And pearly battlements around
Looked o'er the immense of heaven."

P. 9.

"Floated to strains of thrilling melody
Through the vast columns and the pearly shrines."

(*Q. M.*) "Floating to strains of thrilling melody
Through that unearthly dwelling,
Yielded to every movement of the will.
Upon their passive swell the Spirit leaned;
And, for the varied bliss that pressed around,
Used not the glorious privilege
Of virtue and of wisdom."

P. 10.

"Pursued its wondrous way."

This line is in the *D. W.*, as well as in *Q. M.*: then follows the passage printed in our Appendix, vol. ii., p. 530: and with that ends the *D. W.*

P. 12.

"A tyrant's slave."

I suspect this should stand "a tyrant slave"—*i.e.*, a tyrant who is "a slave Even to the basest appetites," as we have it on p. 15, and elsewhere *passim* in Shelley.

P. 18.

"The virtuous man,
As great in his humility as kings
Are little in their grandeur, . . .
. . . . . .
. . . when he falls,
His mild eye beams benevolence no more."

The text stands, not "*as great*," but "*who, great*," &c. Every reader who follows out the thread of the sentence will see that "*who, great*" has no proper syntactical sequence. That Shelley wrote it I raise no question: but, as I have also not the least doubt that he would have altered it if the blunder had caught his far from punctilious eye, I have ventured to make the slight change obviously needed for construction's sake.

P. 27.

Section iv.

According to Mr. Middleton, this section closes in the annotated copy, with the following added lines:

"The buds unfold more brightly, till no more
Or frost or shower or change of seasons mar
The freshness of its amaranthine leaves."

The context makes it impossible that these lines should come in at the end of section iv. The appropriate place for them must be found further on, and the *most* appropriate seems to be on p. 50, where (as the lines are not of the kind one is better pleased to find unplaceable) I have introduced them—altering the ungrammatical word "mar" into "mars," and "its" into "their."

P. 27.

"Even as the leaves," &c.

From the emendated *Q. M.*:

"Even as the leaves
Which countless autumn storms have scattering heaped
In wild dells of the tangled wilderness,
Through many waning years."

P. 33.

"*His* footsteps through that labyrinth of crime."

To correspond with the rest of the diction in this passage, I have substituted "His" for "Its," which appears in all other editions.

P. 36.

"And all their causes to an abstract point
Converging, thou didst bend, and call it God."

In the text, "call'd." The grammatical emendator has to choose between "call" and the uneuphonious "call'dst." This passage of *Q. M.*, beginning "Thou taintest all thou look'st upon," was published in the *Alastor* volume as a separate composition under the title *Superstition*. The close is there altered thus:

"And all their causes to an abstract point
Converging, thou didst give it name and form,
Intelligence, and unity, and power."

P. 40.

"The exterminable spirit it contains
Is nature's only God."

Why "exterminable?" The word would naturally mean "such as can be exterminated;" but Shelley has already termed the spirit of the universe "eternal," and otherwise asserted its unendingness. I almost think that, instead of "exterminable," Shelley must have written "interminable," or "inexterminable;" or should we possibly read "ex-terminable," *quasi* "non-terminable, limitless"?

P. 46.

"All crime
Made stingless by the *Spirit* of the Lord."

I think this should assuredly be "the *Spirit* of the Lord;" in previous editions it stands "spirits."

P. 46.

"Unstained by crime and misery
Which *flows* from God's own faith."

"*Flow*" would be correct, as it is quite obvious that *both* crime and misery are spoken of as thus flowing. If the reader opines that the word ought to have been altered in our text, I can hardly profess to dissent from him.

P. 48.

"O human Spirit! spur thee to the goal
Where virtue fixes universal peace,
And 'midst the ebb and flow of human things
Shows somewhat stable, somewhat certain still,
A light-house o'er the wild of dreary waves."

The text gives "*show* somewhat stable," as if it were the Spirit of Ianthe who is to show this. But I think that indisputably it is "virtue" that really shows this, and consequently the word must be "shows."

P. 52.

"Dawns on the virtuous mind."

In previous editions, the word is "Draws" in this passage; but afterwards, where the same passage is cited in Shelley's Notes, "Dawns." I think "Dawns" is right, and have therefore inserted it.

P. 56.

"The *future*
Fades from our charmèd sight."

The text gives "the *past*," instead of "the future." Nothing, I conceive, can be more unquestionable than that Shelley wrote, or meant to write, "the future."

P. 58.

"The restless coursers pawed the ungenial soil,
Snuffed the gross air, and then, their errand done,
Unfurled their pinions to the winds of heaven."

The emendated *Q. M.* substitutes:

"And, from the earth departing,
The shadows with swift wings
Speeded like thought upon the light of heaven."

P. 76.

"This fragment is the translation of part of some German work, whose title I have vainly endeavoured to discover. I picked it up, dirty and torn, some years ago, in Lincoln's Inn Fields."

Shelley's statement on this point has been a good deal canvassed. Mr. Hogg says that the fragment is not a translation at all, but is Shelley's own original composition. A writer in the *Pall Mall Gazette* ("Joannes," 21st Decr. 1866) refutes this assertion very convincingly. He proves that the fragment really is a translation from a German poem by C. D. F. Schubart; but not an exact translation. The passage beginning "I now mixed with the butchers of mankind," and ending "the giant's steel club rebounded from my body," is an interpolation; and the concluding sentence is substituted for one in which Ahasuerus is made by Schubart to receive ultimate forgiveness. The conclusion of Joannes is that Shelley most probably made the translation, adapting it to suit his own point of view. But the fact appears to be (though this also is controverted by Captain Medwin) that Shelley did not begin to learn German till 1815: so he cannot have been the translator. Medwin says that Shelley's own account of the matter is strictly correct, save in one particular: it was not Shelley, but Medwin himself, who found the translated fragment, with its genuine ending, in Lincoln's Inn Fields (Medwin's *Life of Shelley*, vol. i., p. 57). That author conjectures that the translation had probably appeared in a magazine; and a writer in *Notes and Queries* (C. R. S., 2nd ser., vol. v., p. 373) shows that it came out in 1802 in a monthly magazine named *The German Museum*, vol. iii.

Though Medwin is not an accurate writer, we may fairly accept as true his account of what happened to himself: and conclude that the rhapsodic tale of the Wandering Jew given in the notes to *Queen Mab* is a translated re-casting in prose of the German poem by Schubart, which re-casting was found in the street by Medwin, and through him became known to Shelley.

P. 80.

"It cannot arise from *reasoning*."

The word in the original is "conviction:" but the insertion of that word does not, to my mind, "arise from reasoning," but from an inadvertent repetition.

P. 90.

"Written by a man of great talent."

I.e. Mr. Jefferson Hogg. The articles referred to are those named *Shelley in Oxford*, now incorporated in Mr. Hogg's *Life of Shelley*.

P. 90.

"At the age of seventeen."

The incident referred to is, of course, that of Shelley's expulsion from Oxford. "Seventeen" is a mistake. Shelley was expelled in March 1811; and was then getting on towards nineteen.

P. 91.

"He wrote also a poem on the subject of Ahasuerus, . . . considerably altered before it was printed."

Captain Medwin (*Shelley Papers*, pp. 7, 8) says that Shelley, about the age of fifteen, and Medwin himself, wrote "six or seven cantos on the story of the Wandering Jew; of which the first four, with the exception of a very few lines, were exclusively mine." These four cantos were eventually published in *Fraser's Magazine*, and may be found re-produced, as Shelley's, in a pirated edition (I believe Dugdale's) in two volumes. The cantos really written by Shelley have never, as far as I can trace, been published: the statement made by Mrs. Shelley in the present passage applies therefore, I presume, to the cantos by Medwin, supposed by her to be by Shelley, wholly or mainly. The story of the Wandering Jew evidently exercised great sway over Shelley's imagination; as, besides co-operating in this juvenile poem, he introduced Ahasuerus into *Queen Mab*, into *Hellas*, and into the prose tale of *The Assassins:* there is also an allusion to him in *Alastor*.

P. 92.

"Other alterations scarcely to be called improvements."

At this point of her note Mrs. Shelley extracts, from the *Dæmon of the World*, the Invocation to the soul of Ianthe. As that lyric is now incorporated in our version of *Queen Mab*, I omit it here. I may add that the motto prefixed by Shelley to the *Dæmon of the World* was as follows:

"Nec tantum prodere vati
Quantum scire licet. Venit ætas omnis in unam
Congeriem, miserumque premunt tot sæcula pectus."
Lucan. Phars. L. v., l. 156.

Shelley also added, after the preface to *Alastor* reprinted in our text, the following concluding paragraph: "The fragment entitled *The Dæmon of the World* is a detached part of a poem which the author does not intend for publication. The metre in which it is composed is that of *Samson Agonistes* and the Italian pastoral drama; and may be considered as the natural measure into which poetical conceptions expressed in harmonious language necessarily fall."

P. 92.

Letter to the Editor of the *Examiner*.

As supplementary to this letter on the piracy of *Queen Mab*, I may here extract what Shelley wrote on the same subject to Mr. Gisborne (16th June 1821).* "A droll circumstance has occurred. *Queen Mab*, a poem written by me when very young, in the most furious style, with long notes against Jesus Christ, and God the Father, and the king, and bishops, and marriage, and the devil knows what, is just published by one of the low booksellers in the Strand, against my wish and consent; and all the people are at loggerheads about it. Horatio Smith gives me this account. You may imagine how much I am amused. For the sake of a dignified appearance, however,—and really because I wish to protest against all the bad poetry in it—I have given orders to say that it is all done against my desire; and have directed my attorney to apply to Chancery for an injunction, which he will not get." In another letter (to Mr. Ollier, 11th June 1821) Shelley speaks of *Queen Mab* as "villainous trash." He was right in anticipating that an injunction in Chancery would not be granted: the publisher was, however, prosecuted by the Society for the Suppression of Vice; and even as late as 1840 a conviction followed the republication of *Queen Mab*.

P. 93.

Alastor.

Mr. Peacock says of this poem: "Shelley . . . was at a loss for a title, and I proposed that which he adopted—*Alastor, or the Spirit of Solitude*. The Greek word ἀλάστωρ is an evil genius, κακοδαίμων; though the sense of the two words is somewhat different—as in φανεὶς ἀλάστωρ ἢ κακὸς δαίμων ποθέν of Æschylus. The poem treated the 'spirit of solitude' as a spirit of evil. I mention the true meaning of the word, because many have supposed 'Alastor' to be the name of the hero of the poem." (*Fraser's Magazine*, January 1860).

P. 93.

"The good die first," &c.

Some readers will like to be reminded that these impressive lines are Wordsworth's.

P. 97.

"*Himself* a poet."

In the original edition of *Alastor*, this stands "*Herself* a poet." It is not quite clear that that is a misprint: but I strongly incline to suppose it is, and therefore adhere to the reading of the collected editions.

P. 99.

"Conducts, O Sleep, to thy delightful realms."

In the text, "Conduct:" which is an obvious violation of grammar.

In order to save the frequent repetition *passim* of notes regarding the emendation of trivial (but not the less annoying) slips of grammar or syntax, I here append a list of the emendations of this sort which I have introduced into the text.

P. 133. "Yet nor in painting's light, *nor* [*or*] mightier verse,
Nor [*or*] sculpture's marble language."

P. 155. "In trance had *laid* [*lain*] me thus within a fiendish bark."

P. 164. "But in my cheek
And lips a flush of gnawing fire did find
Its [*their*] food and dwelling."

* *Essays, Letters from Abroad*, &c., vol. ii., p. 239.

P. 168. "And thou, dread Nature, which to every deed,
And all that lives or is, to be *hast* [*hath*] given,
Even as to thee have these done ill, and are forgiven!"

P. 242. "Whose garbs betray
The blackness of the faith *they seem* [*it seems*] to hide."

P. 363. "*Has* [*have*] drawn back the figured curtain of sleep."

P. 458. "Who *mad'st* [*made*] all lovely thou didst look upon."

Vol. ii., P. 59. "Some weak and faint
With the soft burthen of intensest bliss
It is *their* [*its*] work to bear."

P. 81. "If you divide suffering *or* [*and*] dross, you may
Diminish till it is consumed away."

P. 85. "Thou too, O Comet, beautiful and fierce,
Who *drew'st* [*drew*] the heart of this frail universe
Towards thine own."

P. 88. "Which sun or moon or zephyr *draws* [*draw*] aside."

P. 133. "Thou,
Like us *shalt* [*shall*] rule," &c.

P. 157. "The rushing *torrents'* [*torrent's*] restless gleam,
Which, from those secret chasms in tumult welling,
Meet in the Vale."

P. 160. "From *their* [*its*] own shapes magnificent."

P. 178. "What though thou with all thy dead
Scarce *canst* [*can*] for this fame repay," &c.

P. 296. "The . . . thou alone *shouldst* [*should*] be.
To spend years thus, and be rewarded
As thou, sweet love, *requitedst* [*requited*] me."

P. 307. "The *shadows* [*shadow*] of thy moving wings imbue."

P. 401. "Was indeed one of *that* [*those*] deluded crew."

P. 433. "Or whom the sea,
And [*or*] earth with her maternal ministry,
Nourish innumerable."

P. 445. "We pray thee, and admonish thee with freedom,
That thou *do* [*dost*] spare thy friends who visit thee."

P. 107.

"On every side now rose
Rocks which in unimaginable forms
Lifted their black and barren pinnacles
In the light of evening, and (*its precipice*
Obscuring) *the ravine disclosed above*,
'Mid toppling stones, black gulfs, and yawning caves

Whose windings gave ten thousand various tongues
To the loud stream."

The punctuation here is my own—the disputable passage being the one italicized. In the previous editions this stands—

"And its precipice
Obscuring the ravine, disclosed above,
'Mid toppling" &c.,

which I am unable to construe in my mind, or to see as a visible fact with my mind's eye. If any one continues to think it right, I would suggest to him to take up a pencil, and try to jot down the relative positions and rough contours of the precipice which obscures the ravine, and of the ravine which is disclosed above the obscuration. According to my punctuation, the statement is that there were certain rock-pinnacles which, while they obscured the precipice (or precipitous descent) of a ravine, left the ravine itself visible higher up. This is quite intelligible as a picture. In diction it is somewhat involved: not, I conceive, so intolerably involved as Mr. Swinburne opines (in the *Fortnightly Review*, May 1869.)

P. 107.

"Mighty streams,
Dim *tracks* and vast robed in the lustrous gloom
Of leaden-coloured even."

Mr. Garnett (*Relics of Shelley*) says that "tracks" ought to be "tracts." I think he is in all probability right. Still, it is possible that Shelley meant to speak, not of the general *tract* of country, but of those same "mighty streams," which might not inaptly be termed "vast *tracks*" dim in the evening light. I have therefore not felt safe in adopting Mr. Garnett's reading.

P. 110.

"A bright stream
Once fed with many-voiced waves (a dream
Of youth which night and time have quenched for ever),
Still, dark, and dry, and unremembered now."

Here again the parenthesis is mine. In the older texts the passage stands thus:

". . . a bright stream
Once fed with many-voiced waves—a dream
Of youth, which night and time have quenched for ever,
Still, dark, and dry, and unremembered now."

This seems to give two wholly separate and diverse images. The first is a once bright and flowing stream: the second is a dream of youth, now still, dark, *dry*, and unremembered. We ought not, without strong grounds, to attribute to Shelley so incongruous and unmeaning an expression as a youthful dream, now *dry*. The punctuation I have adopted welds the two images into one; viz.: a stream which used to be bright, and is now dark—flowing, and is now dry—sonorous, and is now still; it has been a dreamy reminiscence of youth, but now, through the influence of night (or oblivion) and time, is unremembered.

P. 112.

The Revolt of Islam.

This poem was first published in 1818, under a different title:—*Laon and Cythna, or the Revolution of the Golden City: a Vision of the Nineteenth Century. In the stanza of Spenser. By Percy B. Shelley.* Δὸς ποῦ στῷ καὶ κόσμον κινήσω. Only three copies of *Laon and Cythna* (it is said) had been issued to the public before it was recalled, under circumstances to be mentioned in the sequel. The same

year, 1818, witnessed the reissue of the work under its present title; the edition consisting of the same identical sheets, with a few pages cancelled. On 16th February 1821 (*Shelley Memorials*) the poet wrote to his publisher, Mr. Ollier: "Is there any expectation of a second edition of the *Revolt of Islam?* I have many corrections to make in it, and one part will be wholly remodelled." I find nothing to solve the interesting question *what* the part to be thus treated may have been.

P. 114.

"Nor have I permitted any system relating to mere words to divert the attention of the reader, from whatever interest I may have succeeded in creating, to my own ingenuity in contriving,—to disgust *him* according to the rules of criticism."

In previous texts, the concluding words stand thus: "*Contriving to disgust them* according to the rules of criticism." It is clear that "*him*" (the reader) ought to be substituted for "*them*;" and I think the punctuation I have given must also be requisite—the words "to disgust him" &c. being in syntactical apposition to the words "to divert the attention" &c.

P. 115.

"I have seen the theatre of the more visible ravages of tyranny and war; cities and villages reduced to scattered groups of black and roofless houses," &c.

The allusion here is no doubt more especially to what Shelley saw in France after the campaign of 1814. In Mrs. Shelley's *Journal of a Six-Weeks' Tour*, written in that year, the desolation of Nogent, St Aubin, and Echémine, are particularly referred to.

P. 116.

"An alexandrine in the middle of a stanza."

Shelley had an inadequate idea of his own carelessness. There are three instances of the kind.

1.—C. iv. st. 27—

"Of whirlwind, whose fierce blasts the waves and clouds confound."

2.—C. viii. st. 27—

"Are children of one mother, even Love.—Behold!"

3.—C. ix. st. 36—

"'Fair star of life and love,' I cried, 'my soul's delight.'"

The reader will find that, in the present edition, Shelley has for the first time been taken at his word to a certain extent. The alteration needed in the second instance above-quoted to get rid of the erratum seems so extremely simple that I have ventured to make it: in the other two instances, it is not equally clear what alteration Shelley would himself have authorized, and I leave the lines, with some reluctance, in their abnormal condition. There is one more line which might also be regarded as an alexandrine in the middle of a stanza—

C. v. st. 44—

"By winds which feed on sunrise woven to enchant."

But this, I think, is intended to be read as a decasyllable—

"By winds | which feed | on sun | rise wov'n | t' enchant."

Mr. Garnett, however, (*Relics of Shelley*) cites this (alone) as the peccant alexandrine.

P. 117.

"The sole law which should govern the moral world."

The preface to *Laon and Cythna* contains an additional paragraph, as follows. "In the personal conduct of my hero and heroine, there is one circumstance which was intended to startle the reader from the trance of ordinary life. It was my object to break through the crust of those outworn opinions on which established institutions

depend. I have appealed therefore to the most universal of all feelings; and have endeavoured to strengthen the moral sense by forbidding it to waste its energies in seeking to avoid actions which are only crimes of convention. It is because there is so great a multitude of artificial vices that there are so few real virtues. Those feelings alone which are benevolent or malevolent are essentially good or bad. The circumstance of which I speak was introduced, however, merely to accustom men to that charity and toleration which the exhibition of a practice widely differing from their own has a tendency to promote.* Nothing indeed can be more mischievous than many actions, innocent in themselves, which might bring down upon individuals the bigoted contempt and rage of the multitude." The reader will see as we proceed that the "one circumstance which was intended to startle the reader from the trance of ordinary life" was highly qualified for fulfilling that intention.

P. 118.

"Yet never found I one not false to me."

It strikes me that the sequence of thought would be more nicely expressed if this ran "*Yea*, never found I one" &c. But none of the editions countenances such an alteration.

P. 118.

"Hard hearts and cold, like weights of icy stone
Which crushed and withered mine—that could not be
Aught but a lifeless *clod*, until revived by thee."

"*Clog*" is in all the editions. It seems to me practically certain that it ought to be "a lifeless *clod*." We then have a consistent series of simile:—The heart assimilated to a clod of earth, containing seed; this clod crushed and withered into lifelessness by icy stone (most likely in the sense of stone-like lumps of ice); but afterwards revived—the germs within it revived—by an influence like that of Spring:

"Thou friend, whose presence on my wintry heart
Fell like bright Spring upon some *herbless plain*."

How far the series of simile can be regarded as consistent when we read "clog" I leave the reader to judge.

P. 119.

"The mortal chain
Of Custom thou didst burst and rend in twain,
And *walk* (as free as light the clouds among
Which many an envious slave then breathed in vain)
From his dim dungeon."

The parenthesis here is mine; and the words "walk" and "which" claim some attention. "Walk" stands "walked" in previous editions: one more case of grammatical slovenliness. "Which" is not quite clear; but will perhaps be cleared when we paraphrase the whole sentence in prose. "Thou didst burst and rend in twain the mortal chain of Custom; and didst (as free as light among clouds, which atmosphere of light, or symbolical emancipation, many a slave of prejudice then breathed, vainly envying thy liberty) walk out of the dim dungeon of that Custom whose chain thou hadst burst." This appears to me the most probable sense of the passage. If so, we must reject the ordinary punctuation, which runs thus:

"And walked as free as light the clouds among,
Which many an envious slave then breathed in vain
From his dim dungeon, and" &c.

* "The sentiments connected with and characteristic of this circumstance have no personal reference to the writer." [*Shelley's Note.*]

P. 135.

"The few *lines* alone
Which through her floating locks and gathered cloak,
Glances of soul-dissolving glory, shone."

Is "*lines*" right here? It seems an odd term; but I suppose it *is* right, and is used in the sense of "lines, rays, or pencils, of light."

P. 136.

"Slaves who loathed their state,
Yet, flattering Power, had given its ministers
A throne of judgment in the grave."

This appears to me to mean one of two things:—either (1) "Slaves who loathed their own slavish state, yet who, by offering flattery to mundane Power, had given to the ministers of that Power a throne of judgment in the grave (*i.e.* posthumous authority over the minds of succeeding generations.)" Or else (2) "Who, by offering flattery to a supposed Almighty Power, had given to the ministers of that Power (priests) a show of authority in the world beyond the grave." To bring out either sense I put "flattering Power" between commas. The sentence, as it stands without these in other editions, is to me unintelligible.

P. 138.

"From groans of crowds made *pale*
By famine, from a mother's desolate wail
O'er her polluted child, from innocent blood
Poured on the earth, and brows anxious and *pale*
With the heart's warfare."

The repetition of the word "pale" is pretty sure to be a laxity, not a misprint. There are so many similar instances in the *Revolt of Islam*, and indeed in others of Shelley's poems as well, that ingenuity would be wasted upon attempts at conjectural emendation. Our poet evidently either thought such repetitions perfectly allowable, or did not care to be at the pains of avoiding them.

P. 140.

"And that his friend was false," &c.

It seems strange that Shelley should have allowed these lines to stand; for we find on p. 166 that the friend was *not* false.

P. 141.

"An orphan with my parents lived, whose eyes."

This is substituted, in the *Revolt of Islam*, for the line in *Laon and Cythna*,

"I had a little sister, whose fair eyes."

Here we come upon the nucleus of the "one circumstance [see Notes p. 478] which was intended to startle the reader from the trance of ordinary life"—a brother and sister who develop into lovers.

P. 143.

"And this beloved child thus felt the sway
Of my conceptions gathering,—like a cloud,
The very wind on which it rolls away."

I am in doubt about the meaning and the punctuation here. In other editions it stands:

"And this beloved child thus felt the sway
Of my conceptions, gathering like a cloud
The very wind on which it rolls away."

This might possibly mean: "She gathering the wind (or inspiration) of those conceptions, like as a cloud gathers the very wind on which it rolls away." But, if so, the diction is very tangled and elliptic: and I prefer to understand the meaning, as brought out by my punctuation, to be—"She felt the gathering sway of my conceptions, like as a cloud feels the very wind on which it rolls away."

P. 149.

"Thorough the air and over the sea we sped."

This line limps in all previous editions, being printed, "Through the air" &c.; I trust my slight and sufficiently obvious alteration may not be chargeable with presumption.

P. 153.

The *uprest*
Of the third sun."

"Uprest" is evidently to be accepted for "uprising;" on no warrant—so far as I know—better than the exigency of rhyme. A very calm proceeding on Shelley's part.

P. 156.

"And then the night-wind, *streaming* from the shore."

Surely this ought to be "*streaming;*" in other editions it is "*steaming.*"

P. 161.

"Veiled
In virtue's adamantine eloquence,
'Gainst scorn and death and pain thus trebly mailed,
And blending, in the *smiles* of that defence,
The serpent and the dove, wisdom and innocence."

Can "*smiles*" be right? "Spells" would seem to me rather less inappropriate, or perhaps "coils." But a writer who can talk (as in this very same passage) of a person's being *veiled*, and also *mailed*, in *eloquence* which is *adamantine*, is not to be pronounced misprinted every time that he is incongruous.

P. 164.

"'Twas her *lover's* face—
It might resemble her."

In *Laon and Cythna* the word is "*brother's*," not "lover's;" and of course the appositeness of the ensuing clause is much more obvious.

P. 165.

"The *blosmy* Spring's star-bright investiture."

In *Laon and Cythna*, and also in the original *Revolt of Islam*, "blosmy," instead of "bloomy," as in subsequent editions. I have no doubt that this was correctly printed "blosmy," and little doubt that Shelley never changed it into "bloomy." There is a precisely similar instance in C. i., st. 51, "blosmy" in the first two editions, "bloomy" in the later ones.

P. 168.

"The wound, which bled
Freshly, swift shadows o'er mine eyes had *shed.*
When I awoke, I lay 'mid friends and foes,
And earnest countenances on me *shed*
The light of questioning looks."

"Shed" is here made to rhyme with "shed." "Spread" would be a not unnatural substitute for "shed" in the first instance of the two. But, as already

observed, this is a sort of license which Shelley allowed himself so frequently that there is no ground for suspecting misprint.

P. 168.

"Thus the vast array
Of those fraternal bands *were* reconciled that day."

"Was" would, I conceive, be far better than "were." Yet Shelley may have chosen to treat the word "array" as a noun of multitude. He does the same in C. vi., St. 7.

P. 173.

"That ye should *shed*
The blood of Othman? If your hearts are tried
In the true love of freedom, cease to dread
This one poor lonely man. Beneath heaven *spread*
In purest light above us all, through earth,
Maternal earth, who doth her sweet smiles *shed*."

This stanza is a category of disasters, which it may be amusing to unravel. First, the reader will observe that there is exactly the same blunder as we noted from p. 168—"shed" rhyming with "shed." In *Laon and Cythna*, the sequence of rhymes is "shed, spread, sprend." To this lapsus Shelley's eyes became opened; and, in a slip of errata, he altered the second "sprend" into "shed"—perhaps never observing that the rhyme "shed," no less than "spread," was already discounted. In subsequent editions, Shelley's correction, such as it is, has not been overlooked; but here a new blunder is introduced—the rhymes running "shed, *shed*, *spread*," instead of (as Shelley gave them) "shed, *spread*, *shed*." At last, in our text, Shelley's incorrect correction is duly introduced.

P. 174.

"His straight lips."

I presume this ought to be "strait"—narrow, meagre, compressed (as in a similar passage of *Rosalind and Helen*, p. 266). But it is not a matter of certainty.

P. 176.

"A *lost* and dear possession."

It may be suspected that "*lost*" is a misprint for "*last*." This phrase still forms a part of the simile—a man "who, having much, covets yet more, a *last* (final, culminating) and dear possession." Yet it may be that Shelley mixed up with the mere simile the thought of Laon, engrossed by his *lost* Cythna.

P. 176.

"I turned in sickness, for a veil shrouded her countenance bright."

This is worse than "an alexandrine in the middle of a stanza:" being a line of seven feet, instead of the six needed for a final alexandrine. But Shelley has not himself repudiated it; and so it must remain, a vexation to present and future ears.

P. 181.

"Which swayed in the red *flame*."

In all previous editions, the word has been "light," not "flame." The rhymes, "name" and "frame," are conclusive on this point. Since making this correction, I learn that it had been pointed out as necessary, in 1859, in *The Provincial Magazine*, by the Rev. F. G. Fleay (now of the Grammar School, Hipperholme, near Halifax), who has obligingly communicated to me this and some other important emendations.

P. 183.

"On the gate's turret, and in rage and grief and scorn I wept."

Here is another line of seven feet. It is quite clear that either rage, grief, or scorn, ought to go: and I doubt whether the editor who leaves all three is not foolishly punctilious.

P. 186.

"A confident phalanx, which the foes on every side invest."

Yet another case of the same kind!—Can it be possible that Shelley, at this particular stage of his work, had got to think this an admissible variation of metre? A fit of hardly credible carelessness, even much exceeding the Shelleyan standard, is the alternative and less unlikely supposition.

P. 192.

"For they had sprung," to
"And such is Nature's law divine."

These lines are substituted for the following ones proper to *Laon and Cythna*:

"For to each other
Had high and solemn hopes, the gentle might
Of earliest love, and all the thoughts which smother
Cold evil's power, now linked a sister and a brother.
And such is Nature's modesty" &c.

P. 198.

"Gestures, and looks, *such as in whirlwinds bore.*"

The italicized words appear to me nonsense. "Bore" is a bad rhyme to "power": but such rhymes are continual in Shelley (the very same rhyme, for instance, has occurred in st. iv. of this same canto), so one can conclude nothing from this. "Whirlwinds," in this line, has a suspicious relationship to "whirlpools" in the 6th line of the stanza. I can scarcely conceive that Shelley consciously wrote "such as in whirlwinds bore;" neither do I see that any very probable emendation can be suggested. Perhaps this is the least unlikely:

"And words it gave,
Gestures, and looks such as in whirlwinds *lour*,
Which might not be withstood."

"Looks such as lour in whirlwinds" might no doubt be called "nonsense one remove:" yet expressions similarly loose and vague could be cited from our poet. If we are to stick to "such as in whirlwinds bore," we may adopt Mr. Swinburne's suggestion, and assume that "bore" has the idiomatic force of "bore onward—came surging on;" and that the whole clause means—"Her madness gave forth words, gestures, and looks, which bore onwards as if with the irresistible force of whirlwinds."

P. 199.

Like an *hupaithric* temple wide and high."

The word "hupaithric" is of course the same which is commonly written "hypæthric." In previous editions it stands "upaithric:" but I don't know why that slip should be perpetuated.

P. 201.

"As if some doubt she sought to shift."

One may surmise that this "shift" was inadvertently substituted for "sift," which seems the more natural term. Still, it may pass muster.

P. 202.

"When the red moon on high
Pause ere it wakens tempest."

"Pause" is evidently ungrammatical. I presume, however, that the word is as Shelley wrote it.

P. 207.

"Dream ye *that God* thus builds for man in solitude?"

In *Laon and Cythna*, the phrase stands thus: and the like reading holds good throughout the succeeding stanzas. In the *Revolt of Islam* the alteration "Dream ye some Power" &c. is introduced. It must be confessed that the more direct phrase is the more reasonable one to employ, for the purposes of the context. Shelley withdrew this and some other such phrases, not through any preference of his own, but at the urgency of his publisher, Mr. Ollier, and to avoid the slur which would have been cast on his poem by its suppression. His very strong remonstrance with Mr. Ollier is printed in the *Shelley Memorials*, pp. 81-83. Now that all the hullaballoo about Shelley's "atheism" has roared and squeaked itself into "childish treble," I think it would be an injustice to his reputation for poetry and for courage to discard the original readings in those instances where their place has been taken by some feeble euphemism, such as makes no real substantive difference in the sense, but avails simply to spoil the diction. In the present passage, therefore, and in some others, I have restored the original phrase: elsewhere, in cases where the form of expression is mitigated without decided injury to the verse, I have retained the alteration. One instance of restoration comes close afterwards, at the beginning of st. vii., which, in the *Revolt of Islam*, runs as follows:

"Men say that they themselves have heard and seen,
Or known from others who have known such things,
A shade, a form, which earth and heaven between
Wields an invisible rod; that priests" &c.

P. 209.

"Oh! love (who to the heart of wandering man)."

The reading in all editions hitherto has been "who to the hearts of wandering *men*:" but, as the rhyme is "can," we must obviously read "man"—and, along with that word, "heart." In line 3 of this same stanza, the collected editions give the grammatical solecism "*thou* only can:" this I am enabled, from the first edition, to correct into "*those* only can."

P. 212.

"Yes, it is Hate," &c.

This stanza, punctuated as it stands in other editions, puzzled me extremely. At last I threaded its mazes; and trust that my punctuation will enable the reader to do the same with less trouble. As regards the amphisbæna in this stanza, I find in the old texts "*its* twine," along with "*he* threats." It is clear that even a serpent that goes both ways ought not to be both *it* and *he* in one same sentence: I have therefore felt warranted in making the slight change of "*its*" into "*his*."

P. 213.

"Are children of one mother, Love. Behold."

This has been converted from "an alexandrine in the middle of a stanza" by the omission of the word "even" before "Love."

P. 217.

"Words which the lore of truth in hues of grace."

In this stanza, "grace" is made to rhyme (?) with "name and flame." If I could think of any right word for which "grace" has been inadvertently substituted, I should not hesitate to insert it: but none such occurs to me—except indeed "flame," which already figures among the rhymes of the stanza.

P. 218.

"There was one teacher who Necessity
Had armed with strength and wrong against mankind,
His slave and his avenger aye to be."

These lines are altered from the passage in *Laon and Cythna*, which runs as follows:

"There was one Teacher, and must ever be,
They said, even God; who the necessity
Of rule and wrong had armed against mankind,
His slave and his avenger there to be."

In our text, which follows the first *Revolt of Islam*, the lines have the same general purport, softened in expression. In the intermediate editions, however, it is no longer "*who* Necessity had armed," but "*whom* Necessity had armed." This would make a considerable change in the meaning: I apprehend it to be simply a misprint. The stanza before us, in *Laon and Cythna*, happened to have ten lines instead of nine. But Shelley, with his characteristic carelessness, has after all not reformed it: he has indeed cut out the odd line, but the sequence of rhymes remains incorrect—the 9th line, for instance, being made to rhyme with the 2nd. But for the difficulty of the ten lines, I should be minded to restore the words just quoted from *Laon and Cythna*.

P. 219.

Stanza xviii.

The first five lines of this stanza stand as follows in *Laon and Cythna*:

"For gold was as a god whose faith began
To fade, so that its worshipers were few,—
And hell, and awe, which in the heart of man
Is God itself: the priests its downfall knew,
As day by day their altars lonelier grew."

P. 225.

Stanza v.

"Came" is here made to rhyme with "came." This probably is advisedly done, for the sake of emphasis. There is, however, in the previous editions, a serious slip in this same stanza—

"Led them thus erring from their native *home*;"

which final word, rhyming as it does with "band" and "sand," I have with entire confidence altered into "*land*." (Here again Mr. Fleay had anticipated me). St. viii. gives "way" rhyming with "way."

P. 225.

"With smoke by day and fire by night (the power
Of kings and priests), those dark conspirators
He called."

My punctuation here innovates so far as the parenthesis is concerned; and, now that the passage is in print, I rather fear my innovation is wrong. My idea in it was that Shelley had intended a sneer at the pillars of cloud and of fire in the exodus; and, in allusion to them, termed the kingly beacons of smoke and flame "the power of kings and priests." But it now appears to me that most probably the construction runs thus:—"He, with smoke by day and fire by night, called the power [summoned the armed force] of kings and priests, those dark conspirators." My parenthesis is therefore included in the list of errata.

P. 226.

"The cries
Of victims, to their fiery judgment led,
Made pale *their* voiceless lips who seemed to dread,
Even in their nearest kindred, lest some tongue
Be faithless to the fear yet unbetrayed."

This magnificent stanza should be sacred from the chilly hand of the emendator; and, so far as mine is concerned, will certainly be so. Yet I must confess to a suspicion that there is a grave misprint in it. The statement, as the lines stand, seems to be this. "The cries of victims, about to be burned at the stake, made pale the voiceless lips of auditors, who seemed to dread that the tongue of some of these victims, even though of their dearest kindred, might prove faithless (infirm) as regards fear—a fear which had not yet been betrayed by any of their fellow-victims." Or we might possibly understand, by the phrase "be faithless" &c., that the auditors dreaded lest the victims, by expressing any sort of sympathy with individuals among the auditors, should call attention to them and their fears, and thus betray them to the vengeance of the oppressors. If the *former* is the meaning, two observations present themselves; 1, that "faithless *to* the fear yet unbetrayed" is a singular phrase to express this sense; and, 2, that, after victims had been heard crying out on their way to the stake, it was rather late to dread that they might possibly show signs of fear—the very fact of their so crying being sufficient evidence that their fortitude was not proof against the terrors of a death by fire. My conjecture is that "fear" may be a simple misprint for "few." Adopting "few," we obtain the following sense. "The cries of victims, about to be burned at the stake, made pale the voiceless lips of auditors, who seemed to dread that the tongue of some of these victims, even though of their dearest kindred, might prove faithless to (might, as a last resource for self-preservation, inform against) the *few* patriots or ringleaders who remained as yet unbetrayed;"—the auditors in question being no doubt in some cases these same patriots.

P. 230.

"O King of Glory."

In *Laon and Cythna*, "O God Almighty."

P. 231.

"And Oromaze, and Christ, and Mahomet."

In the *Revolt of Islam*,

"And Oromaze, Joshua, and Mahomet."

The original is surely much more reasonable. Indeed, nothing save perspicuity is affected by substituting "Joshua"—which is of course a mere synonym of "Jesus."

P. 231.

"'Twas an Iberian priest."

In *Laon and Cythna*, "He was a Christian priest." And, in this same stanza, "the unbelievers" used to be "the rebel atheists." So again, in st. xlv., "their infidel kindred" replaces "their atheist kindred."

P. 232.

"So he made truce with those who did despise
The Expiation and the Sacrifice,
That, though detested, Islam's kindred creed
Might crush" &c.

There is an extra drop of gall in the original passage from *Laon and Cythna*:

"So he made truce with those who did despise
His cradled idol, and the sacrifice
Of God to God's own wrath—that Islam's creed
Might crush" &c.

P. 234.

St. xliv. gives "still" rhyming with "still." The phrase "in silence still" is rather a poor one: yet there seems no reason to doubt that Shelley was contented with it, or to suspect a misprint.

P. 234.

"As 'Hush! hark! Come they yet? God, God! thine hour is near!'"

This is the line as it stands in *Laon and Cythna;* and is far finer than the line toned down in the *Revolt of Islam* (giving "Just heaven, thine hour" &c.)

P. 235.

"They burned them both with hellish mockery."

Who are "both"? I can only make out one for certain—the young man who, weary of life, gave himself up as Laon. The only other person I can discern in the context is the woman who, in religious zeal, had burned her three children. She herself, it seems, had then died; and had been regarded as an exalted saint, "an angel treading the visible floor of heaven" (in *Laon and Cythna*, "the threshold of God's throne"). If she—*i.e.* her corpse—is the second of the two who were "burned with hellish mockery," the motive for such a proceeding on the part of these orthodox zealots is not apparent. I almost think we ought to read

"*Two* without doubt or dread
Came to the fire,"

each giving himself up as Laon. Everything would then be plain; and the ghastliness of the horror would become all the grimmer through its dash of absurdity.

P. 235.

"And *that* some kissed their marble feet."

The use of "*that*" must be regarded here as a grammatical license; only explicable by referring this sentence back, athwart two or three intervening sentences, to the "'Tis said" which opens st. xlvii.

P. 239.

"Dark priests and haughty warriors gazed on him."

This line has no rhyme: the word with which it ought to rhyme is "tone." Perhaps Shelley's intention was to get the word "on" (instead of "him") at the end of the present line. The next stanza, xv., repeats the rhyme "made."

P. 241.

"It draws the milk of power."

So in the first edition. Later texts give "*And* draws," &c.—thus nullifying the sentence.

P. 241.

"'Yes, in the desert *there* is built a home
For Freedom.'"

This stands, in all the previous editions, "*then* is built" &c. The error is obvious. The same stanza gives "there" twice over as a rhyme.

P. 241.

"'*Laone* shall be convoyed there.'"

In previous texts, the words are "'*that Cythna* shall be convoyed there.'" This is a most patent slip of memory on Shelley's part; for the persons to whom Laon was speaking knew their female bugbear under no other name than Laone. See, for instance, C. x. st. 41.

P. 242.

"Fast flying
Upon the *winds* of fear."

"The *wings* of fear" may strike one as the more obvious expression, and a very probable emendation. But some poetical readers will prefer "winds."

P. 246.

"She won them, though unwilling, her to bind
Near me, among the *snakes*."

In recent editions, "snakes" had got altered into "stakes."

P. 246.

"When *they* had fled,
One soft reproach that was most thrilling kind
She smiled on me, and nothing *then* we said."

The word here given as "*they*" is "*then*" in all the editions; possibly through the influence of the succeeding "then" on the mind of the compositor. It might be going too far to say that the reading in question is absolutely indefensible; one may understand it to mean—"When then one soft and kind reproach had fled [from Cythna's lips], she smiled on me." But it seems to me that the other sense and reading which I have given are convincing—("When the mutes had fled from the burning pyre, Cythna smiled on me one soft and kind reproach"); so convincing that I venture to introduce this change into the text.

P. 246.

"Yet—yet—one brief relapse, like the last beam
Of dying flames! The stainless air around
Hung silent and serene."

This punctuation must, I think, represent the true sense. In other texts there is only a comma after "flames."

P. 249.

"How atheists and republicans can die."

In the *Revolt of Islam* an unmeaning and colourless line is substituted for the above sufficiently full-toned one in *Laon and Cythna*—

"How those who love yet fear not dare to die."

P. 252.

"A golden mist did quiver
Where its wild surges with the lake were blended,—
(Our bark hung there—as *on a* line, suspended
Between two heavens)—that windless waveless lake
Which four great cataracts from four vales, attended
By mists, aye feed: from rocks and clouds they break,
And of that azure sea a silent refuge make."

As it were a final explosion of fireworks, Shelley and his printers had concentrated into this penultimate stanza of the *Revolt of Islam* almost all the blunders which ingenuity could suggest: blunders of meaning, of structure, of metre, of rhyme, of punctuation. The blunder of rhyme consists in the repetition of "suspended" in the 5th as well as the 2nd line: the other errors can only be rightly exhibited by copying out the old version of the lines.

"A golden mist did quiver
When its wild surges with the lake were blended
Our bark hung there, as *one* line suspended
Between two heavens, that windless waveless lake;
Which four great cataracts from four vales, attended
By mists, aye feed, from rocks and clouds they break,
And of that azure sea a silent refuge make."

Two or three words must be given to the italicized "*when*" and "*one*." For "when" I have substituted "where" with considerable confidence. The surges must have been momently and for ever blending with the lake: therefore nothing is defined by saying that the golden mist was visible *when* the two thus blended, but *where*—at the point of junction. "*One*" makes the most meagre possible sense, and destroys the metre. I think my emendation, "*on a*," is nearly certain; and, as something may fairly be ventured when metre or no metre is the question, have hazarded its introduction. The meaning, with this change, is of course that the bark hung at the point of junction between the river's surges and the lake; looking as though it had been suspended on a single line between two heavens—namely, the actual sky, and the sky-reflecting lake.

P. 253.

"His lines on the Bridge of the Arve."

I.e., the poem named *Mont Blanc*, vol. ii., p. 154.

P. 254.

"A letter written in answer to one of these friends."

This was Godwin—as shown in the *Shelley Memorials*.

P. 254.

"My Chancery-paper."

As far as I am aware, this has never been published.

P. 255.

"A measure which only *pretends* to be regular."

In the original edition of *Rosalind and Helen*, the setting of the verses is uniform throughout, as if the metre were also uniform: it may partly be to this that Shelley alludes. In our present text, the same system as in all the other poems has been pursued—that of indicating, by the variation of setting, the diversities of rhythm and rhyme. Another point which Shelley probably referred to is the frequent irregularity of the rhyming—many lines, for instance, being left without any rhyme at all. The author having given this general caveat, I shall not pause over each particular instance.—The somewhat slighting estimate which Shelley has recorded in this notice of *Rosalind and Helen* corresponds with an expression in one of his letters (6th April 1819) to Mr Peacock. "I lay no stress on it, one way or the other. The concluding lines are natural."

P. 255.

"I do not know which of the few scattered poems I left in England will be selected by my bookseller to add to this collection."

The poems thus added were in fact the *Lines written among the Euganean Hills*, *Hymn to Intellectual Beauty*, and *Ozymandias*.

P. 256.

"Shapes which seem
Like wrecks of childhood's sunny dream."

Mr. Fleay, in order to obtain a rhyme to the soon ensuing word "now," suggests to read "show," instead of "seem." It is a capital suggestion; though I think most likely Shelley wrote "seem" advisedly, and left "now" to take care of itself. This is but one out of many emendations proposed by Mr. Fleay for the avoidance of recurrences of rhymelessness.

P. 257.

"A sound from *there*, Rosalind dear."

In previous editions this stands "A sound from *thee*:" of which I can make no

right sense. "*There*" seems to render the whole passage consistent, and I cannot doubt its being correct. Helen objects to sit on the stone indicated by Rosalind, because she cannot bear the murmur of the lake, which is audible at that spot. A sound "from *there*" [from the lake] comes reminding her too painfully of similar sounds heard in their own country. This fairly corresponds with what Helen had said in her first speech:

"That our land; . . .
. . . . . .
. . that *inland stream*,
And the blue mountains, shapes which seem
Like wrecks of childhood's sunny dream."

P. 260.

"And the bright boy beside her feet
Now *lay*, lifting at intervals
His broad blue eyes on her;
Now where some sudden impulse calls
Followed."

The final word has, in previous editions, been "*following*." This is obviously a syntactical slip—and indeed stultifies the whole clause. It represents that the boy lay down: and, *while thus lying*, he sometimes lifted his eyes, and sometimes followed where some sudden impulse called. It is quite manifest that the true antithesis is not between two participles, "lifting" and "following;" but between two preterits, "lay" and "followed."

P. 261.

"In morning's light, in evening's gloom," &c.

This account of how Rosalind haunted her husband's tomb for (apparently) days together, and how their children triumphed audibly in his death, is inconsistent with what we find at pp. 266-7.

P. 263.

"The youth upon the pavement fell."

This is one of the lines left rhymeless. Perhaps it should be "rolled" instead of "fell." Or it might be still better to adopt Mr. Fleay's proposal, and obtain a quasi-rhyme to "fell" by inverting the epithets in a preceding line, and reading

"I am now weak and *old and pale*."

P. 264.

"And down my cheeks the quick tears *fell*."

The original gives "ran" instead of "fell;" and then, in the penultimate line of the paragraph, comes the final word "tell." Neither "ran" nor "tell" has any rhyme: we may therefore without rashness conclude that Shelley did not mean to write "ran" but "fell"—"the quick tears *fell*." This also, I find, had been suggested by Mr. Fleay.

P. 265.

"The seal of that Lethean spring . . . ."

I have introduced the . . . . : previous editions give a semi-colon. It will be observed that this word "spring" has no rhyme: which fact, coupled with the incompleteness of the sentence, convinces me that in reality a whole line has dropped out in printing. As a line cannot be editorially vamped up for the purpose, the practical alternative is to indicate (as by our punctuation) that the sentence remains broken off. There can be little doubt that what Shelley made Rosalind say was something to this effect: "My babes weaned me from the thirst of death; which all the grief and shame that I had undergone (since my first daughter's birth withheld me from the grave) *had again made me long for*."

P. 271.

"The torturers with their victims' pain."

A rhymeless line. Mr. Fleay proposes to read

"With their victims' pain the torturers:"

an emendation which I should have been tempted to adopt, had I known of it in time.

P. 273.

"With which they drag from *mines of gore*
The chains their slaves yet ever wore."

"Mines of gore" is a very extraordinary expression: yet "mines" seems tolerably appropriate to "chains," and "gore" is perfectly consistent with the general context. I incline to think it ought to be "*rivers* of gore." Or "mines of *yore*" might have some plausibility; as the passage is about the reinstatement of the old *traditional* forms of despotism.

P. 274.

"Three years he left his native land,
And *in* the fourth, when he returned,
None knew him."

I have ventured, both here and in the similar phrase at the end of p. 262, to substitute "*in*" for "*on*;" conceiving it to be certain that Shelley, if he had reflected a moment about it, would have said "*in* [and not *on*] the fourth year." Indeed, this might be a simple misprint.

P. 274.

"On him, whom once 'twas paradise
Even to behold, now misery *lay*."

There is no rhyme to "lay." That, as we have already seen, is no argument against its being correctly printed. I think, however, "weighed" might fairly be suggested as a substitute—rhyming (quite accurately enough for Shelley's practice) with "fed" and "outspread."

P. 284.

"In aëry rings they bound
My Lionel. As every strain
Grew fainter but more sweet, his mien
Sunk with the sound relaxedly."

In previous editions, this has stood—

"My Lionel, *who*, as every strain;"

a clause which, followed as it is by the "his" of the succeeding line, is highly worthy of Mrs. Gamp, and proportionately unworthy of Shelley. The omission of "*who*" requires us to pronounce "Lionel" (for the metre's sake) as a full trisyllable: this is quite in accordance with the poet's system in other lines.

P. 286.

"Red morning through the *wood*."

Hitherto the last word of this line has always been printed "woods:" the rhyme to it is "flood." Of course, both words must be made to stand in the singular, or else both in the plural. The only question is—which of these two alternatives to adopt. I think the singular must be correct: "the floods of the lake" might seem an over-strained expression, whereas "the wood" is entirely consistent with what appears at the beginning of the poem—

"It was a vast and antique wood
Through which they took their way" &c.

P. 286.

"Is shadowed with *steep* rocks, and cypresses."

The word "steep" is in the original edition: in the collected editions it had dropped out.

P. 288.

"Count Maddalo is a Venetian nobleman."

It can scarcely be needful to observe that Count Maddalo represented, in fact, not a Venetian but an English nobleman—Lord Byron. Julian represented Shelley himself. The poem of *Julian and Maddalo* was sent by Shelley to Leigh Hunt in a letter which contains the following remarks:—"It was composed last year at Este. Two of the characters you will recognize; and the third is also, in some degree, a painting from nature, but, with respect to time and place, ideal. . . . I have employed a certain familiar style of language to express the actual way in which people talk with each other whom education and a certain refinement of sentiment have placed above the use of vulgar idioms. I use the word 'vulgar' in its most extensive sense. The vulgarity of rank and fashion is as gross, in its way, as that of poverty; and its cant terms equally expressive of bare conceptions, and therefore equally unfit for poetry. Not that the familiar style is to be admitted in the treatment of a subject wholly ideal, or in that part of any subject (which relates to common life) where the passion, exceeding a certain limit, touches the boundaries of that which is ideal. Strong passion expresses itself in metaphor borrowed from objects alike remote or near, and casts over all the shadow of its own greatness. . . . I leave you to judge whether it is best to throw it [*Julian and Maddalo*] into the fire (!), or to publish it."—A letter to Mr. Ollier dated 15th December 1819 (*Shelley Memorials*) says: "Have you seen my poem, *Julian and Maddalo*? . . . I mean to write three other poems, the scenes of which will be laid at Rome, Florence, and Naples, but the subjects of which will be all drawn from dreadful or beautiful realities, as that of this was." Alas that these poems remained unwritten!—and even, apparently, unattempted, unless possibly, in the case of Florence, one may assume *Ginevra* to fulfil this intention.

P. 289.

"The unconnected exclamations of his agony will perhaps be found a sufficient comment for the text of every heart."

It strikes me that this would read more naturally if it stood inverted:—"a sufficient *text* for the *comment* of every heart,"—*i.e.*, text sufficient for every heart to comment on. But perhaps Shelley meant to imply that the exclamations of the madman constituted a comment on his misfortunes, which furnished the text; and that the hearts of the auditors, by pondering on the comment, could readily restore the text.

P. 289.

"I rode one evening with Count Maddalo
Upon the bank of land which breaks the flow
Of Adria towards Venice."

This is the Lido. It may be interesting to quote here the account which Shelley, in a letter to his wife, gave of his first ride on the Lido with Lord Byron.* "He took me in his gondola across the laguna to a long sandy island which defends Venice from the Adriatic. When we disembarked, we found his horses waiting for us; and we rode along the sands of the sea, talking. Our conversation consisted in histories of his wounded feelings, and questions as to my affairs, and great professions of friendship and regard for me. He said that, if he had been in England at the time of

* *Essays, Letters from Abroad, &c.*, vol. ii. p. 109.

the Chancery affair, he would have moved heaven and earth to have prevented such a decision. We talked of literary matters; his Fourth Canto [of *Childe Harold*], which he says is very good, and indeed repeated some stanzas of great energy to me." In the same letter Shelley had already said that "the weather here is extremely cold:" of which likewise a reminiscence may be traceable in *Julian and Maddalo*. His reference to gondolas is worth citing also. "These gondolas are the most beautiful and convenient boats in the world. They are finely carpeted, and furnished with black, and painted black. The couches on which you lean are extraordinarily soft, and are so disposed as to be the most comfortable to those who lean or sit. The windows have at will either Venetian plate-glass flowered, or Venetian blinds or blinds of black cloth to shut out the light." And again:—"The gondolas themselves are things of a most romantic and picturesque appearance: *I can only compare them to moths of which a coffin might have been the chrysalis.* They are hung with black, and painted black, and carpeted with grey. They curl at the prow and stern; and, at the former, there is a nondescript beak of shining steel, which glitters at the end of its long black mass."

P. 291.

"A windowless, deformed, and dreary pile."

Mr. Browning affirms that the "windowless" building described by Shelley is not what he supposed it to be, the madhouse, but a "penitentiary for rebellious priests, to the west between Venice and the Lido," on the islet of San Clemente. In 1851 Mr. Browning convinced himself of this at Venice; "San Servolo, with its madhouse, far from being 'windowless,' is as full of windows as a barrack." This evidence is irrefragable: yet Medwin had said (*Life of Shelley*, vol. i. p. 318), "The madhouse so graphically drawn on the island I know well." The writer of the present notes likewise knows both buildings by sight, but would not venture, of his own direct knowledge, to pronounce which is which: possibly Medwin also only knew by sight a windowless building, and took Shelley's word for it that this was a madhouse. It had occurred to me as possible that the two edifices might have interchanged inmates since Shelley's time, but I believe there is no ground for such a surmise.

P. 292.

"'And *ever* at this hour
Those who may cross the water hear that bell.'"

I cannot doubt that we ought here to read "ever"—perpetually, invariably. In previous editions the word is "even."

P. 294.

"As thus I spoke."

The line which terminates with these words is left rhymeless. So also, a few lines farther on,

"We climbed the oozy stairs."

P. 294.

"The clap of tortured hands,
Fierce yells, and howlings, and lamentings keen."

This is a probably conscious reminiscence from the famous lines of Dante:

"Quivi sospiri, pianti, ed alti guai,
. . . . . .
Voci alte e fioche, e suon di man con elle."

P. 298.

"The *full* hell
Within me."

Should this be "the *foul* hell"? "Full" seems a rather uncharacteristic epithet.

P. 298.

"Nor dream that I will join the vulgar *lie*,
Or with my silence sanction tyranny."

The original edition gives "the vulgar *eye*." I do not discern very much appositeness in either reading: but, as I presume that the change in the collected editions may have been made on authority, and as it is certainly the clearer expression of the two, I leave it as I find it. At any eccentricity of expression, we are entitled to remember that the speaker is a madman.

P. 299.

"Thy work is finished; I am left alone."

In previous editions, this verse is followed by a line of asterisks; and so with the next two paragraphs, and three others further on in the madman's reverie. I think it better to suppress these asterisks. They suggest that the poem is fragmentary, which I apprehend to be by no means the case in any essential respect: or, if they are not regarded as indicating that, they only serve to show, in the madman's speech, a certain degree of inconsecutiveness which the intelligent reader will be quite prepared for, even without the aid of asterisks.

P. 299.

"'That you had never seen me! never heard
My voice! and more than all had ne'er *endured*
The deep pollution of my loathed embrace!'"

You and *thou* are mixed up in this poem, so far as the madman's speech is concerned. It was probably mere carelessness on Shelley's part: but there might be some greater plausibility in the mixture here than elsewhere, considering the bewilderment of the speaker's mind, his sudden changes of mood, and the greater or less degree of familiarity indicated by a foreigner's use of "thou" and "you." "Endured" is not a very perfect rhyme to "heard." It had suggested itself to my mind that the right word might be "incurred:" but any change would be presumptuous.

P. 300.

"*These* were not,
With thee, like some suppressed and hideous thought."

The context does not supply any true antecedent to "*these*." We are apparently to understand as the antecedent "thoughts of love," "the impulses of passion," or the like.

P. 301.

"Fear me not: against thee I'd not move."

The metre of this line is anything but perfect. As a substitute, one might propose either

"Fear *thou* me not: against thee I'd not move,"—or

"Fear me not: *I against thee would not* move."

P. 302.

"The air
Closes upon my senses, as despair
Upon my heart—let death upon *despair!*"

This is the reading in the *Posthumous Poems*. Later editions give "let death upon *my care!*" This has, to my ear, rather a make-rhyme sound: at any rate, being unaware of any authority for it, I have thought it best to restore the original reading, defective as it is in point of rhyme.

P. 304.

"His dog was dead: his child had now become
A woman."

It would seem that Shelley wrote the opening words under the impression that Maddalo's dog had already been mentioned in the earlier part of the poem. No such mention, however, occurs. The reader will not need to be reminded that this alleged return of Shelley (Julian) to Venice, after an interval of years in which a daughter of Byron (Maddalo) has developed from a small child into a woman, is altogether imaginary. Byron's daughter Allegra, the child here referred to, preceded even Shelley to the tomb, dying when scarcely past infancy.

P. 305.

"From the Baths of Lucca, in 1818."

I have added these introductory words. Mrs. Shelley's note on *Julian and Maddalo* (in the collected editions) has hitherto followed on along with her note on *Rosalind and Helen*; both being mixed up in one consecutive "Note on Poems of 1818." I have adhered to this date, 1818, given in the collected editions: but, in its first form of publication (the volume of *Posthumous Poems*, 1824), *Julian and Maddalo* is dated "Rome, May 1819." Probably the poem was not *finished* until this later date. Internal evidence favours, I think, the surmise that the termination of the poem, beginning with the new paragraph of p. 303, or thereabouts, was written after some interval of time from the preceding portion; written rather with a view to concluding the poem *somehow* than with the same degree of impulse and interest which had prompted the earlier verses.

P. 305.

"Audisne hæc, Amphiarae, sub terram abdite?"

This grand line is quoted by Cicero (*Tusc. Disp.* ii. 60) from the *Epigoni* of an unknown author.

P. 306.

"This poem was chiefly written upon the mountainous ruins of the Baths of Caracalla."

The few words which Shelley here gives to this matter are divinely beautiful: but the reader will not object to see them supplemented by some others, taken from a letter which the poet wrote to Mr. Peacock on 23d March 1819.* "I think I told you of the Coliseum, and its impression on me, on my first visit to this city. The next most considerable relic of antiquity, considered as a ruin, is the Thermæ of Caracalla. These consist of six enormous chambers, above 200 feet in height, and each enclosing a vast space like that of a field. There are in addition a number of towers and labyrinthine recesses, hidden and woven over by the wild growth of weeds and ivy. Never was any desolation more sublime and lovely. The perpendicular wall of ruin is cloven into steep ravines filled up with flowering shrubs, whose thick twisted roots are knotted in the rifts of the stones. At every step, the aerial pinnacles of shattered stone group into new combinations of effect, and tower above the lofty yet level walls, as the distant mountains change their aspect to one travelling rapidly along the plain. . . . These walls surround green and level spaces of lawn, on which some elms have grown, and which are interspersed towards their skirts by masses of the fallen ruin, overtwined with the broad leaves of the creeping weeds. The blue sky canopies it, and is as the everlasting roof of these enormous halls.—But the most interesting effect remains. In one of the buttresses that supports an immense and lofty arch 'which bridges the very winds of heaven,' are the crumbling remains of an antique winding staircase, whose sides are open in many places to the precipice. This you ascend, and arrive on the summit of these piles. There grow on every side thick

* *Essays, Letters from Abroad, &c.*, vol. ii. pp. 158-60.

entangled wildernesses of myrtle, and the myrletus, and bay, and the flowering laurestinus (whose white blossoms are just developed), the white fig, and a thousand nameless plants sown by the wandering winds. These woods are intersected on every side by paths, like sheep-tracks through the copsewood of steep mountains, which wind to every part of the immense labyrinth. From the midst rise those pinnacles and masses, themselves like mountains, which have been seen from below. In one place you wind along a narrow strip of weed-grown ruin. On one side is the immensity of earth and sky; on the other, a narrow chasm which is bounded by an arch of enormous size, fringed by the many-coloured foliage and blossoms, and supporting a lofty and irregular pyramid, overgrown, like itself, with the all-prevailing vegetation. Around rise other crags and other peaks; all arrayed, and the deformity of their vast desolation softened down, by the undecaying investiture of Nature. . . . Still further, winding up one half of the shattered pyramids, by the path through the blooming copsewood, you come to a little mossy lawn surrounded by the wild shrubs. It is overgrown by anemones, wallflowers, and violets, whose stalks pierce the starry moss, and with radiant blue flowers whose names I know not, and which scatter through the air the divinest odour—which, as you recline under the shade of the ruin, produces sensations of voluptuous faintness, like the combinations of sweet music. The paths still wind on, threading the perplexed windings, other labyrinths, other lawns, and deep dells of wood, and lofty rocks, and terrific chasms. When I tell you that these ruins cover several acres, and that the paths above penetrate at least half their extent, your imagination will fill up all that I am unable to express of this astonishing scene."

Prometheus and *Adonais* were viewed by Shelley with more complacency than his other poems. It will be interesting to collect here some of his expressions concerning the former, in addition to the phrases cited by Mrs. Shelley from a letter dated 6th April 1819.—6th Sept. 1819. "My *Prometheus* . . . is, in my judgment, of a higher character than anything I have yet attempted, and is perhaps less an imitation of anything that has gone before it."—15th Oct. 1819. "The *Prometheus*, a poem in my best style, whatever that may amount to, will arrive with it: . . . it is the most perfect of my productions."—15th Dec. 1819. "My *Prometheus* is the best thing I ever wrote."—6th March 1820 (to Mr. Ollier). "*Prometheus Unbound*, I must tell you, is my favourite poem: I charge you therefore specially to pet him, and feed him with fine ink and good paper. *Cenci* is written for the multitude, and ought to sell well: I think, if I may judge by its merits, the *Prometheus* cannot sell beyond twenty copies."—8th June 1821. "You may announce for publication a poem entitled *Adonais*. . . . I shall send it you either printed at Pisa, or transcribed in such a manner as it shall be difficult for the reviser to leave such errors as assist the obscurity of the *Prometheus*" [which the Gisbornes had been requested to revise, with the co-operation of Mr. Ollier himself: Mr. Peacock, however, seems to have taken the principal part.]—10th April 1822. "*Prometheus* was never intended for more than five or six persons."—[Conversation reported by Trelawny]. "My friends say my *Prometheus* is too wild, ideal, and perplexed with imagery: it may be so. It has no resemblance to the Greek drama: it is original, and cost me severe labour. Authors, like mothers, prefer the children who have given them most trouble."

P. 307.

"What a Scotch philosopher characteristically terms 'a passion for reforming the world.'"

This phrase is in Forsyth's *Principles of Moral Science*.

P. 312.

"Speak, Spirit! From thine inorganic voice,
I only know that thou art moving near,
And *love*. How cursed I him?"

Taking this passage exactly as it stands, I understand it to mean: "I only know that thou [the Spirit of the Earth] art moving near me, and that Love is also moving near me." This seems to be the direct sense: but how far is it significant in, and consistent with, its context? The idea that "Love" is near Prometheus in his agony seems to be very abruptly and startlingly introduced. Driven to seek for some reason *why* Love should thus be near, the reader may be fain to think he has found it in the fact that Panthea and Ione are there, to comfort Prometheus as far as the conditions of the case allow. But this does not seem admissible; for the statement made by Prometheus is that he knows the presence of the Earth-Spirit and of Love from the "inorganic voice" of the former. If we attempt a verbal alteration, the first that suggests itself is to read—

> "I only know that thou art moving near,
> And *lov'st*"—

i.e., "that thou are present with, and lovingly disposed towards, me." But neither does this look consistent with what Prometheus had said in his last preceding speech to the Earth—

> "Mother, thy sons and thou
> *Scorn* him without whose all-enduring will
> Beneath the fierce omnipotence of Jove
> Both they and thou had vanished."

Another emendation occurs to me: but I confess that it is an audacious one—much too audacious to be intruded into the text:—

> "Speak, Spirit! From thine inorganic voice,
> I only know that thou art moving near:
> And *Jove*—how cursed I him?"

P. 313.

"The Magus Zoroaster, my *dead* child."

This is the reading of the original edition—not "*dear*," as in subsequent issues. I certainly think "dead" the better epithet of the two, according to its place in the context.

P. 314.

"With which our pallid race hold *ghastly* talk."

I suspect this should be "*ghostly*." "Ghostly" would merely mean "phantasmal, as of ghosts:" whereas "ghastly" is a violent word, hardly suitable unless the "talk" had some strong element of horror—which surely there is nothing to suggest that it had.

P. 316.

> "Heap on thy soul, by virtue of this curse,
> Ill deeds: then be thou damned, beholding good
> Both infinite as *is* the universe,
> And *thou*, and thy self-torturing solitude!"

This has heretofore been printed, with the loosest of punctuation,—

> "Heap on thy soul, by virtue of this curse;
> Ill deeds, then be thou damned, beholding good;
> Both infinite as is the universe,
> And thou, and thy self-torturing solitude."

But, when the punctuation is set right, everything is not set right. Either "*is*" or "*thou*" bewrays the laxity of Shelley's grammar; and "*both*" is dropped into the first place that offers, not the best. It appears to me that the general idea predominant in Shelley's mind was this: "Beholding both good infinite as is the universe, and beholding also thyself and thy self-torturing solitude." To bring out this sense,

we should retain "*is*," alter "*thou*" into "*thee*," and (being unable to help it) leave "*both*" where it stands: and even then the sense is but badly brought out. It is clear that Shelley, if he *meant* this, did not *say* it: I think it safer therefore to regard the intended sense as running thus: "Beholding good infinite both as is the universe, and as art thou, and as is thy self-torturing solitude." For this sense, we ought to alter "*is*" into "*are*;" "*thou*" being thus right, and "*both*" hardly misplaced. *Some* change is manifestly required in the text: nor should I hesitate to introduce one of the emendations above set forth, if only I could be confident as to which of the two best represents Shelley's thought.

P. 322.

Fourth Fury, Fifth Fury, &c.

In previous editions these are called "First Fury, Second Fury," &c. But this confounds them with the Furies (First, Second, and Third) who have *already* been speaking; whereas it is quite certain that these new speakers are new arrivals, come to the summons contained in the preceding "Chorus of Furies." For the sake of clearness, I have therefore felt warranted in making this small change.

P. 327.

"A rainbow's arch stood on the sea
Which rocked beneath, immovably;
And the triumphant storm did flee
(Like a conqueror, swift and proud)
Between,—with many a captive cloud."

This has hitherto been punctuated—

"And the triumphant storm did flee,
Like a conqueror, swift and proud,
Between with many a captive cloud."

If "between" is right, it seems very desirable to mark, by definite punctuation, the only sense of which it seems capable—*i.e.*, "the storm did flee *between*—or through the arch of—the rainbow." I feel rather uncertain, however, whether "between" *is* right; possibly we ought to read

"*Bestrewn* with many a captive cloud"—

or something to the same general effect.

P. 327.

"I sate beside a sage's bed,
And the lamp was burning red
Near the book where he had *fed*."

"The book where he had fed" is surely a most slovenly expression. It can only mean "the book in or from which he had fed his mind;" which sense would be rather less badly expressed by "*whence* he had fed." I should strongly surmise that Shelley had, in the first instance, written "where he had *read*;" and then, observing the preceding rhyme "red," altered "read" into "fed," without reflecting that he ought to conciliate this "fed" with "where" by some modification of the latter word also.

P. 328.

"Till thou, O King of Sadness,
Turn'st by thy smile the worst I saw to recollected gladness."

In previous editions, the word is "turned:" Grammar protests against that. The uppermost substitute would be "Turn'dst." This, however, is so uneuphonious that I think "Turn'st" may fairly claim a preference.

P. 331.

"But not as now,—since I am made the wind" &c.

This passage, to the end of the speech, is by no means perspicuous to me. I suppose, however, that it is printed much as Shelley intended it to stand, and that its general meaning is as follows. "Erewhile I used to sleep locked, as now, in Ione's arms. Yet not exactly as now: for now I find myself, in dream, conversing with thee; and being last night thus in converse with thee, I had a sleep troubled and yet sweet, whereas my waking hours are too full of care and pain."

P. 334.

"It is some being
Around the crags."

I suspect "around" of being a misprint for either "among" or "amid." "Some being *around* the crags" would be a curious sort of being.

P. 337.

"Like many a *lake-surrounded* flute."

This epithet seems to me void of meaning: I can hardly doubt its being a misprint. The original edition of *Prometheus Unbound* (1820) gives "lake-surround*ing*"—which is not any more intelligible. A friend has suggested to me as an emendation "lake-*resounded*." This is at any rate plausible, but I have not ventured to introduce it into the text.

P. 340.

"Resist not the weakness!"

The chief *raison d'être* of this line manifestly is that it should rhyme to "meekness." It must, however, have *some* meaning beyond this; which meaning I should apprehend to be—"Attempt not to overcome thine own weakness, which makes thee passive in our hands." If so, "Resist not *thy* weakness" would express the sense more distinctly, and would perhaps be the true reading.

P. 341.

"Who made that sense which, *at* the winds of Spring
In rarest visitation, or the voice
Of one beloved heard in youth alone,
Fills the faint eyes with falling tears?"

I have here taken a serious liberty with the text; substituting "*at*" for "*when*." Let the reader peruse the whole sentence with "when," and he will infallibly find that something is either wrong or missing.... I have no doubt that in fact a *whole line* is missing through Shelley's oversight, or less likely through the printer's; and presume that the entire meaning ought to run something like this: "Who made that sense which—when the wind of Spring in rarest visitation, or the voice of one beloved heard in youth alone, *is felt or heard again*—fills the faint eyes with falling tears?" For an editor to supply a line would be the height of audacity: he has therefore to choose between some minor form of emendation, and the leaving of a vexatious hiatus in the structure and meaning of the sentence. I have made bold to adopt the former alternative. By reading "*at*," we do not indeed obtain the full sense *very fully expressed*; but we do obtain a passable suggestion of it, and get rid of the defect of structure.—See the *Witch of Atlas*, st. xiv., for a very parallel passage.

P. 344.

"Who is master of the slave?—If the abysm."

This line has hitherto stood printed "Who is *the* master" &c. That is so evident a spoiling of the metre that one may well, I think, regard it as a misprint, or mere casual oversight.

P. 344.

"Others, with burning eyes, lean forth, and drink
With eager lips the wind of their own speed."

The same letter of Shelley's to Mr. Peacock which has been already quoted from (see p. 494) contains a passage which might seem to furnish the genesis of these beautiful lines. He is speaking of the Arch of Constantine. "The keystone of these arches is supported each by two winged figures of Victory, *whose hair floats on the wind of their own speed*, and whose arms are outstretched, bearing trophies, as if impatient to meet."

P. 348.

"Which in the winds *and* on the waves doth move."

I confidently insert the "*and*," which does not appear in previous editions. If the reader will look to the two stanzas of Asia's lyrical speech, he will perceive that each of the penultimate lines is a decasyllabic; and that the metrical structure of the three stanzas is in all other respects identical. I therefore infer, as a matter almost of demonstration, that this penultimate line of the intermediate stanza ought also to be a decasyllabic—which it becomes by the addition of the "*and*." Moreover, this makes the form of expression more natural—more what one would *à priori* expect it to be.

P. 361.

"The palaces and tombs
Of those who were their conquerors, mouldering round.
Those imaged" &c.

The ordinary punctuation gives a colon after "conquerors," and no stop at all after "round." Mr. Swinburne (in his article in the *Fortnightly Review*) expounds a meaning in accordance with the old punctuation, admitting at the same time that the sentence can barely be construed. As I cannot help feeling strongly convinced that the altered punctuation (which I proposed in 1868 in *Notes and Queries*) is correct, I have introduced it into the text, and here add a paraphrase of the passage, as I understand and punctuate it.—"Thrones, altars, judgment-seats, and prisons, were like those monstrous and barbaric shapes sculptured by the ancient Egyptians on still unworn obelisks, and recording matters once famous, now forgotten,—which shapes yet look forth in triumph over the palaces and tombs of their Saracenic or other conquerors, now mouldering around them. Those shapes did, at the time when their meaning was understood, image forth, unto the pride of kings and priests of that remote age, a dark yet mighty faith, a supernatural and desolating power coextensive with the world: now, being no longer understood, those shapes are mere objects of astonishment. And even so the thrones, altars, judgment-seats, and prisons, remain as yet unruined, and, whereas they used once to have a practical meaning, they now have none such."

P. 361.

"The man remains,—
Sceptreless, free, uncircumscribed, but man:
Equal, unclassed, tribeless, and nationless,
Exempt from awe, worship, degree, the king
Over himself; just, gentle, wise: but man.
Passionless? no:—yet free from guilt or pain."

I have altered the punctuation and emphasis of these lines by putting a colon at the end of the first, and a full stop at the end of the second, line ending with the word "man." In other editions, there are no stops at these particular points. The reader will observe that thus, in those other editions, the statement made at the opening of the passage is that "man remains sceptreless (unsubjected to any sceptre), *but* equal,

exempt from degree, and the king over himself; free, *but* exempt from awe; uncircumscribed, *but* unclassed, tribeless, and nationless." A little reflection will show that this "*but*" is quite inappropriate; for there is no opposition or antithesis, but the contrary, between the epithets which precede the "*but*," and those which succeed it. I am convinced therefore that this old punctuation is wrong, and mine right: the gist of the statement now being different—viz.: that "man, though sceptreless, free, and uncircumscribed, is still man; though equal, the king over himself, &c., he is still man. He has not passed from the human into any other condition: only his human condition is now an exalted instead of a dejected one."

P. 363.

"The pine-boughs are singing
Old songs with new *gladness:*

. . . . .

The storms mock the mountains
With the thunder of *gladness.*"

If Shelley had observed that his printer or himself had here twice given "gladness" as the rhyme, I almost think he would have altered one of the two. The first "gladness" is plainly right: the second might not unreasonably be altered into "madness;" understanding "madness" in the sense of "frenzied exultation," or more especially "maniac glee." Thus, on p. 370,

"The joy, the triumph, the delight, the *madness!*
The boundless, overflowing, bursting gladness!"

And the same two words as rhymes are frequently encountered in other pages of Shelley—for instance, in the *Skylark*, st. xxi.

P. 365.

"We come from the mind
Of humankind,
Which was late so dusk and obscure and blind."

I cannot doubt that this ought to be "*obscure*"—not "*obscene*," as in previous editions. "Obscure" agrees by similitude with its companion epithets "dusk" and "blind," and by contrast with its opposing epithets "clear" and "serene." With "obscene" this is not the case: it introduces a novel element—and one which is scarcely congruous with the poetic environments.

P. 368.

"Its plumes are as feathers of sunny frost."

Every ear must notice the exceptional, not to say unrhythmical, quality of this line. Should it read thus?

"Its feathers are as plumes of sunny frost."

P. 369.

"Purple and azure, white *and* green and golden."

The italicized "*and*" is not in other editions. I cannot doubt that Shelley gave it in, for the metre's sake.

P. 369.

"Filling the abyss with sun-like lightenings."

I have introduced this spelling "lightenings," instead of "lightnings." The latter word leaves a syllable deficient in the line. So again, vol. ii. pp. 112, 398.

P. 370.

"And serpents, bony chains twisted around
The iron crags, or within heaps of dust

To which the tortuous strength of their last pangs
Had crushed *the iron crags*."

This repetition of "the iron crags" is, I have no doubt, an oversight. But in all probability it is Shelley's own oversight, and emendation is impossible.

P. 373.

"A half *infrozen* dew-globe."

This is the reading in the original edition: later texts alter it into "*un*frozen." It appears to me that "*in*frozen" is right; for the whole simile (applicable to the preceding passage as to the vitalizing of the moon) sets forth how the *warmth* of dawn dissolves a dew-drop into mist. To call this dew-drop, in the first instance, "half frozen" (or "infrozen") furthers the simile; but to call it "half unfrozen" counteracts the simile.

P. 375.

"When the sunset sleeps
Upon its snow,
And the weak day weeps
That it should be so."

In previous editions the second of these two couplets is assigned to the Earth as speaker, not to the Moon. That an alteration should not be lightly made in such a case I am the first to admit; but it appears to me *certain* that this couplet ought to belong to the Moon, and I have therefore, as under an editorial obligation, made the transfer. It had appeared to me certain, simply on this internal evidence—that the couplet completes the sense, the metre, and the rhyme, of the Moon's speech, and is at variance with all these properties of the Earth's speech. But assurance is made doubly sure when we turn to the Fragment, vol. ii. p. 533. Here we find that Shelley had at first written, in continuation of the Moon's speech, six lines, which he afterwards cut out, substituting this couplet; and one cannot but see in a moment the great probability that the substituted couplet may have been so jammed in between the Moon's speech and the Earth's as to seem, to the printer's eye, proper rather to the second than the first.

P. 378.

"A slight fragment of a song of Tasso."

See vol. ii. p. 314. The residue of the *Tasso* fragment has been recovered since Mrs. Shelley wrote.

P. 381.

"The verbal alterations in this edition of *Prometheus* are made from a list of errata written by Shelley himself."

The reader who notices that in one or two instances I have restored the readings of the original edition of the *Prometheus* may perhaps infer that I had overlooked this statement by Mrs. Shelley. Such, however, is not the case. I quite assume, and act upon the assumption, that some things wrong in the first edition are set right in the collected editions. But, unfortunately for himself, an editor cannot know how far this is the case in particular instances: he cannot know that what seems to him a misprint is in fact an emendation. The arbiter must at last be his own judgment, guided by scrupulous reluctance to alter, unless alteration seems strictly necessary. I hope to have acted within this rule.

P. 383.

"Preserved in the Colonna Palace."

Now in the Barberini Palace.

P. 385.

"The Castle of Petrella."

This Castle is near Aquila, close to the frontier of the Papal States.

P. 395.

"So much that you might honourably live,
And reconcile yourself with your own heart,
And with your God, and with the offended world."

Something has already been said (p. 493) concerning the jumbled use of the pronouns "thou" and "you," and their congeners. The tragedy of *The Cenci* is naturally the poem of Shelley's which gives most play for such jumbling, and the author has freely used the opportunity. Indeed, no blunder is more common—one might say, constant—with English authors, good and bad alike: none is more teazing to the ear which happens to be punctilious enough to catch it. As regards *The Cenci* more especially, two points are worth noticing. 1st, That, if Shelley had attentively reproduced the modes of Italian diction, he would have used "thou" for all speeches from superiors to inferiors, or between two speakers who are extremely affectionate or intimate, and "you" for all other speeches: and, that, if he had neglected this extra-nicety, but had pursued some other plan *on system*, we should probably find "thou" in all the more solemn or exalted passages, and "you" in all the more level ones. In point of fact, the poet has not acted systematically upon either of these rules, nor upon any rule at all: all sorts of people say, on all sorts of occasions, sometimes "thou" and sometimes "you." If I may trust my own judgment, this is at best an inexcusable laxity; and, when one "thou" appears among several instances of "you" in one same speech (or *vice versâ*), is so slatternly that an editor is warranted in regarding it as a careless slip of syntax and language, and in altering it accordingly. This I have done in a few cases—such only as are peculiarly flagrant, and do not cause practical difficulties in the rectifying process. The first instance forms the citation at the head of the present note: in previous texts, "thou" &c. are used four times, and "you" &c. fourteen times, in the speech quoted from. The other instances (as altered in our edition) are as follows:—

P. 413.—"I know thou art my friend."
P. 447.—"I pray you, Cardinal, that you assert."
P. 449.—"Think, I adjure thee, what it is to slay."

There is one other very bad case; but I have flinched from altering an old-fashioned and literary idiom into a modern substitute:—

P. 448.—"*Beatrice* (*turning to the Judges*) I prithee mark."

P. 397.

"Would speak with you.
"Bid him attend me in
The grand saloon."
"Farewell; and I will pray."

These lines have always been misprinted hitherto. One line has been made out of

"Bid him attend me in the grand saloon;"

and the residue has been left fragmentary.

P. 417.

"If thou, poured forth on the polluted earth,
Couldst wash away the crime, and punishment
By which *I* suffer."

This "*couldst*" stands "*could*" in all previous editions.—I do not find the phrase "punishment by which I suffer" very clear. I presume, however, we are to understand that the whole sentence, were it not truncated, would run somewhat thus: "If my own blood could wash away the crime, and if punishment by which I suffer could atone for another's misdeed, I would gladly kill myself." To emphasize this train of thought, I here italicized the word "*I*."

P. 427.

"Nor all the taunts
Which from the prosperous weak misfortune takes."

The plagiarizing reminiscence from *Hamlet* in these lines will strike the loosest memory: others from *Othello* and *Macbeth* are equally glaring at the beginning of this same scene, and its end. Nor are these the only ones. Yet no doubt Shelley was sincere in referring (see p. 384) to a particular imitation of Calderon as "the only plagiarism which I have intentionally committed in the whole piece."

P. 428.

"When next we meet . . .
"May all be done,—and all
Forgotten!"

This is the reading of the original Italian edition. Some readers will no doubt prefer the variation which appears in the English texts, assigning the words "May all be done" to the first speaker (Orsino): my own preference, however, is rather the other way, and at any rate, as a question of authority, I know of nothing to impugn the original reading.

P. 432.

"With thine own blinding beams!
"Peace! peace!"

The line stands thus truncated in all the editions. Perhaps we ought to read—"Peace, *husband!* peace!"

P. 435.

Scene iii.

The reader will observe, at the opening of this scene, two lines, of which one is too short, and the other too long. If a re-arrangement of the lines would have set the metre right, I should not have scrupled to give it: but this is not the case—*some* inaccuracy would always remain.

P. 436.

"The *gelid* blood."

This word is, in the original edition, "gellied;" in later editions, "jellied." Thus it is impossible to determine whether Shelley really meant "gelid," frozen, or "jellied," coagulated. As I think "gelid" the preferable word, I give that.

P. 440.

"Guilty! who dares talk of guilt? My lord."

My own sense of rhythm would dictate the insertion of "to" in this line after "dares." But Mr. Swinburne (*Fortnightly Review*) prefers the rhythm as it stands; so I perceive it would be very unsafe to make the addition.

P. 446.

"Now let me die.
"This sounds as bad as truth."

This line is metrically complete as above: but previous texts tag on to it the words "Guards there." The difference which I have made in this respect entails a few corresponding differences (merely in the methodizing of the lines) in the following three verses.

P. 446.

"On the *dead* earth."

This is the reading of the original edition; "*dread*," as in subsequent editions, is a manifest perversion.

P. 458.

"Whose love was *as* a bond to all our loves."

I have inserted "*as*," conceiving it to be a necessity of metre which Shelley can only by inadvertence have neglected.

P. 459.

"Here, mother, tie
My girdle for me, and bind up this hair
In any simple knot: ay, that does well.
And yours, I see, is coming down. How often
Have we done this for one another! now
We shall not do it any more."

The point given in these lines with so deep a mixture of domestic and tragic simplicity recurs in what Shelley wrote concerning the group of the Niobe in Florence. "It is the figure of a mother in the act of sheltering from some divine and inevitable peril the last, we may imagine, of her surviving children. The little creature . . is clothed in a thin tunic of delicate woof; and her hair is fastened on her head into a knot, probably by that mother whose care will never fasten it again."—Apparently, the passage in *The Cenci* must have been written before Shelley had seen the Niobe group—at least, in its original marble.

P. 461.

"An accomplished lady living near us."

Mrs. Gisborne. See the poem, vol. ii. p. 244.

P. 461.

"The following letter to a friend in London."

Mr. Peacock. The letter, dated "July 1819, Livorno," is printed in the *Essays* &c., vol. ii. pp. 175-178.

P. 462.

"I must be contented with an inferior actor."

The original letter contains some further particulars, which may as well be inserted here, regarding the tragedy.—"I think you know some of the people of that theatre, or at least some one who knows them: and, when you have read the play, you may say enough perhaps to induce them not to reject it without consideration. But of this perhaps, if I may judge from the tragedies which they have accepted, there is no danger at any rate. Write to me as soon as you can on this subject, because it is necessary that I should present it—or, if rejected by the theatre, print it—this coming season; lest somebody else should get hold of it, as the story, which now exists only in manuscript, begins to be generally known among the English. The translation which I send you is to be prefixed to the play, together with a print of Beatrice. I have a copy of her picture by Guido, now in the Colonna Palace at Rome—the most beautiful creature you can conceive. Of course you will not show the manuscript to any one."—Lady Shelley mentions that the reason for preserving a strict incognito as to the authorship of *The Cenci* was Shelley's apprehension that, were it produced on the stage and known to be his, his sister-in-law Miss Westbrook might hire people to hiss it down.—I am told that the eminent tragedian Macready, some while after his retirement from the stage, said he would return to it for the express purpose of acting Count Cenci, were the opportunity to offer: a great testimony to the value of the character for the purposes of the acting drama.

END OF VOL. I.

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Digitized with financial assistance from
Government of Maharashtra
on 30 January, 2020